

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX

STEP-BY-STEP

PHOTOSHOP BLENDING

New brush skills to
revolutionise your art

38

UNMISSABLE
PAGES OF ART
TECHNIQUES



Inside

LEARN TO PAINT LIKE
ARTHUR RACKHAM

ARTRAGE AND
PAINTER ADVICE

WACOM INKLING
VERDICT INSIDE

FANTASY WORLDS

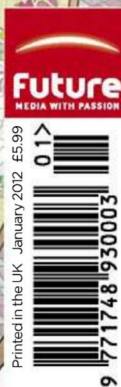
How to reference
natural elements for
incredible results

GET INSPIRED BY

Art Nouveau

Give your digital art a classical twist, with **Marta Dahlig**.

PLUS! The life and art of **Alphonse Mucha** explored



Marta shares her
process on line art,
mosaics and more!

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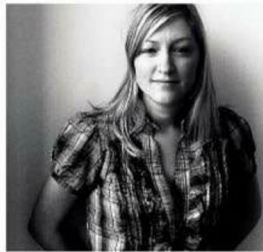
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Welcome... to something new



Reading about the history of Art Nouveau in our Legends feature on Alphonse Mucha on page 44, I was suddenly struck by how similar the story of this art movement compares to what's happening in digital art right now. In the late 19th century, artists were using new

technologies to publish and distribute their own work without the need or help from the art establishment. Its new style also became unpopular and was ridiculed by the art elite. This sounds familiar when you think of how artists can self-promote and publish their art right now, and how people don't see some digital imagery as a true art form. But look at how Art Nouveau is revered now...

Also, while we're usually the first to advocate using custom brushes, shortcuts and the all-important Undo, we kind of go back on our word in Remko Troost's workshop on how to slow-paint. Essentially, he creates a digital image without the comforting safety net of the raft of shortcuts in digital art software. It's a really interesting read.

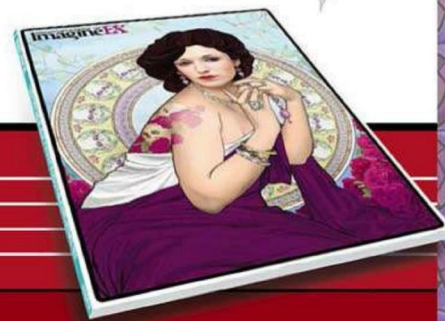
Don't worry though – we're not turning our backs on your favourite art tools! To prove it, Don Seegmiller steps up to share unmissable Photoshop advice on how to blend with colour, while Sean Andrew Murray takes digital art on a tour through Arthur Rackham's illustrious world.

As always, if you have any feedback regarding ImagineFX, please get in touch at the address below.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



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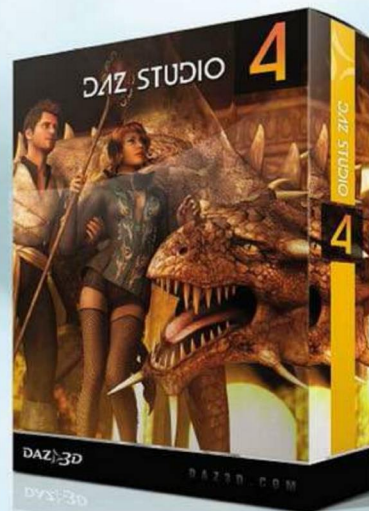
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In progress

It wasn't sinful picking Marta for our cover...



Marta hit the ground running with her first, and only, WIP for our Mucha cover. Starting with a full-colour painted sketch, to give the team a clear idea of where she was heading, Marta picked up on Mucha's circular framing, his clean, flat colouring and floral decoration.



While Marta was on safe ground with her colour-painted sketch, next she evoked Mucha's cleanly stroked line art. Every line needs to have a purpose and Mucha used unique tricks to bring his images to life, which Marta studied, to replicate digitally.



The final image – for the cover – is a testament to Marta's keen eye for Mucha's style, and her skill. Some last-minute changes are made; the digital pen replaced by jewellery, the border expanded and the floral décor turned into skull designs. You can read how Marta created this image in her workshop, which starts on page 68.

For her Seven Deadly Sins series Marta used Mucha's framing layouts as a basic inspiration, but she says: "Nowadays I'm more interested in learning not just the style itself, but the sensual, natural grace of his characters."



ImagineFX Cover artist

A fan of Mucha since seeing his work in a Prague museum in 2001, Marta was the perfect choice for this issue's cover



Marta Dahlig

COUNTRY: Poland

SOFTWARE: Photoshop

WEB: www.blackeri.deviantart.com

Marta is a leading digital artist who has sought inspiration from Mucha. "What I find most inspiring about him is the constant search and struggle of a man to balance his ethnic identity with the commercial purpose of his works," says our cover artist. As a freelancer Marta is well aware of the balance

between creating a personal painting and meeting a client's needs. "Trying to smother your sensitivity and develop your own space within a very strict market-dictated commission... is a very valid problem, one that most freelancers can easily relate to," says Marta. We think you'll agree, she's achieved both with this issue's cover. 🌸

ImagineFX

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

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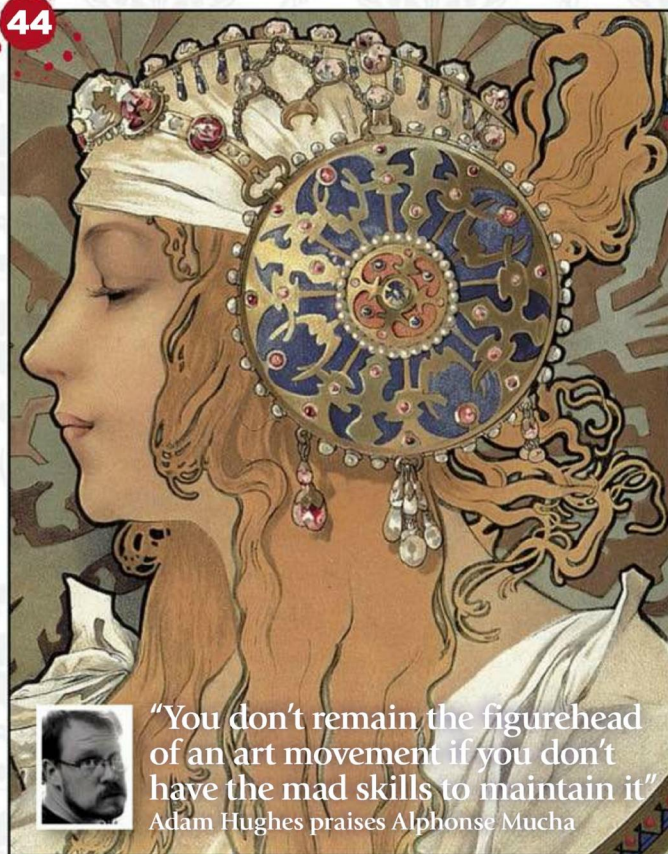
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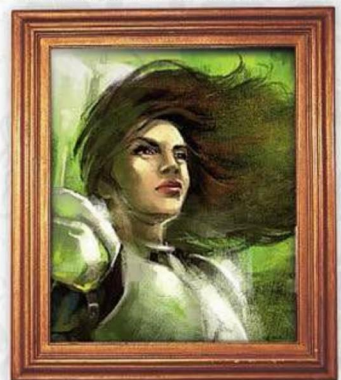
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"You don't remain the figurehead of an art movement if you don't have the mad skills to maintain it"
Adam Hughes praises Alphonse Mucha

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art ➔



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Blaž Porenta



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Development sheet



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Sean Andrew Murray paints
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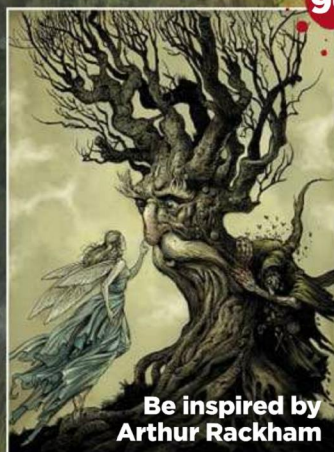
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Including ears, feet, frayed clothing,
muddy footprints and more!



Be inspired by
Arthur Rackham

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



 **Johannes Holm**
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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Johannes' career in digital art sounds effortless: childhood fascination with drawing, art classes, freelance illustrator and then storyboard and concept artist. However, his passion has always been backed up by hard graft. "I've worked for television, on books and games," he tells us.

Originally from Iceland, Johannes moved to the US in 2006 to study illustration. After graduating in 2009 from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco he was offered a job as an illustrator at Ubisoft, where he now works on its games. "I still freelance for US and European publications and thoroughly enjoy the work and people that I get to meet along the way."

1 MALFUNCTION "This was painted for a short sci-fi story I wrote. In a world controlled by artificial intelligence, people are inspected by machines to see if they're functioning correctly."

2 THE DRAGON QUEEN "I was inspired by all the fantasy stories I read, which sparked my own imagination enough to paint it."

1



ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Johannes wins himself a copy of Character Modeling 3 and Exotique 6. To find out more about these two indispensable art resources, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.



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ImagineFX January 2012

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com



Artist crit

Accomplished figure painter Jane Radstrom appreciates the technical aspects in Johannes' art.



"Johannes' works impart a strong sense of space through fading objects in the distance. By using this sense of atmospheric perspective he neatly places the focus on key foreground elements."



1

Asya Yordanova

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SOFTWARE: Painter, Photoshop



"I focused on heavily improving my drawing skills just about three years ago in 2008," Asya tells us, "because I had an epiphany that I wanted to pursue a career in the arts industry, specifically in book and story illustrating and character design."

With a detailed pencil-sketch approach to drawing, later coloured in Photoshop, the 22-year-old artist has also recently been experimenting with more painterly techniques. "That's really inspired by one of my favourite artists, Phil Hale," she says.

1 HEADACHE "I tried to give this one the atmosphere of an old school horror story. It was inspired by the kind of artworks usually featured as covers of classic pulp magazines."

2 THE PRINCE AND THE CROW "Here I went for a more surreal, dreamlike atmosphere. I tried to achieve that by putting together in one place elements that are usually connected with quite different environments: water (the tentacles) and air (the bird)."

2





John Brian Casacop

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



"I've always wanted to be a comic book artist, but after I finished college five years ago, I ended up as an advertising creative," says

John. Yet it was his love for painting that made him jump ship and now he's become involved in the game development industry. "As an artist I never get tired of reading and rereading about fundamentals," he says, "and I treat each painting as a journey where I learn various artistic principles while coming to a deeper understanding of the experiences that influence my art."

1 THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT OF ALL "Friendship is the most valuable gift one can give because it can open the door to many other beautiful things. To illustrate this idea, I decided to come up with this symbolic, whimsical piece."

2 ORDER OF THE EMERALD "A heroes' team splash page from the indie graphic novel my friend Josh Pierce and I are doing in our spare time. Painting this was pretty challenging because of the number of characters and details that had to be in it."

3 THE RED HOOD "This is my take on Red Riding Hood and the Tin Man, the first two of many characters I designed for the indie graphic novel. It's based on fairy tales so I made my illustrations as painterly as possible."



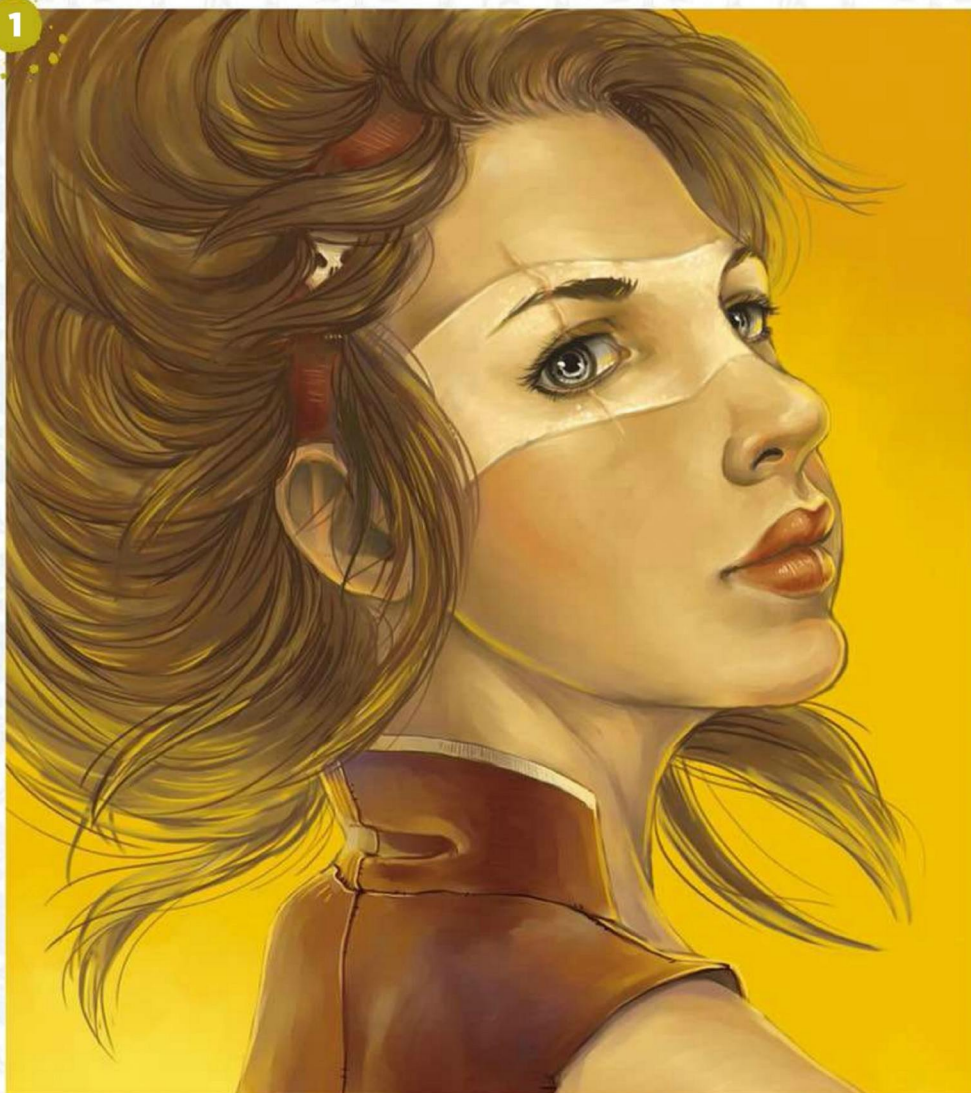
IMAGINEFX CRIT



"John's taken core elements from the Wizard of Oz and run with the theme. And who doesn't love seeing a group of heroes, united by one cause, staring off-camera as if their lives depended on it?"

Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor

1



Erin McManness

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SOFTWARE: Painter



Currently freelancing in illustration and jewellery design, Erin is also "single-handedly keeping the coffee business booming".

Her introduction to digital art came during college, and soon she was taking avatar and character commissions online. "After realising how much I loved it, I switched my major from theatre to studio art and never looked back," she says.

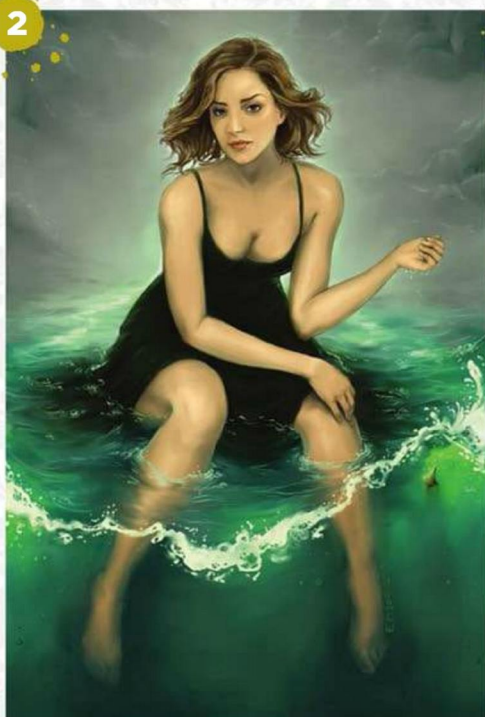
Erin's now embarking on a master's degree in illustration, and after that she aspires to work in a studio setting creating games.

1 ARTEMIS "This is a commissioned work of Artemis, an original character who's a strong-willed, no-nonsense kung-fu fighter. I enjoyed painting a headshot of her for my client, giving her a more feminine, wind-blown appeal."

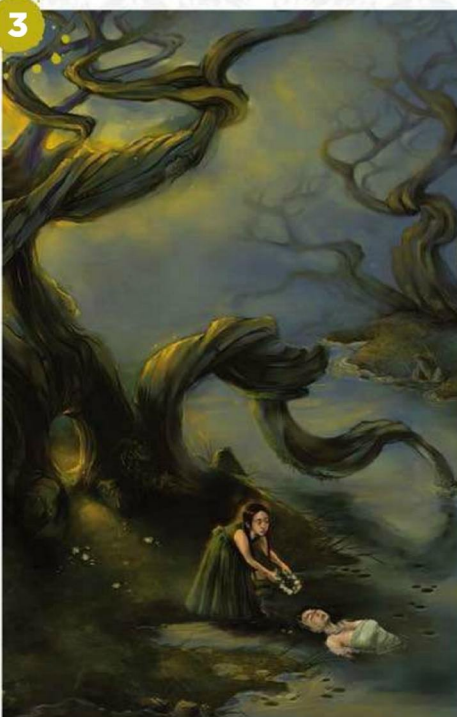
2 OCEAN OF LIES "Some art friends and I were putting on an online art auction based around the movie Inception. I was chosen to represent the lonely and tragic Mal, and painted this piece as my auction sample. I loved the water imagery in the movie, and wanted to link it to the sense of drowning in one's own delusions that Mal undergoes as a character."

3 THE SPIRIT GUIDE AND THE TREE OF PURGATORY "This is my interpretation of Meredith, a spirit guide in a swampy sort of purgatory. Meredith acts as a mother figure at times, and gifts certain people with wreaths of daisies to protect their spirits."

2



3



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Erin's kung-fu gal portrait is deceptive and surprising. The feminine, pretty face and wind-blown hair are subverted by the hidden scar cutting across the character's eye. Any image that makes you look twice is a winner."

Ian Dean,
Deputy Editor

Trevor Smith

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



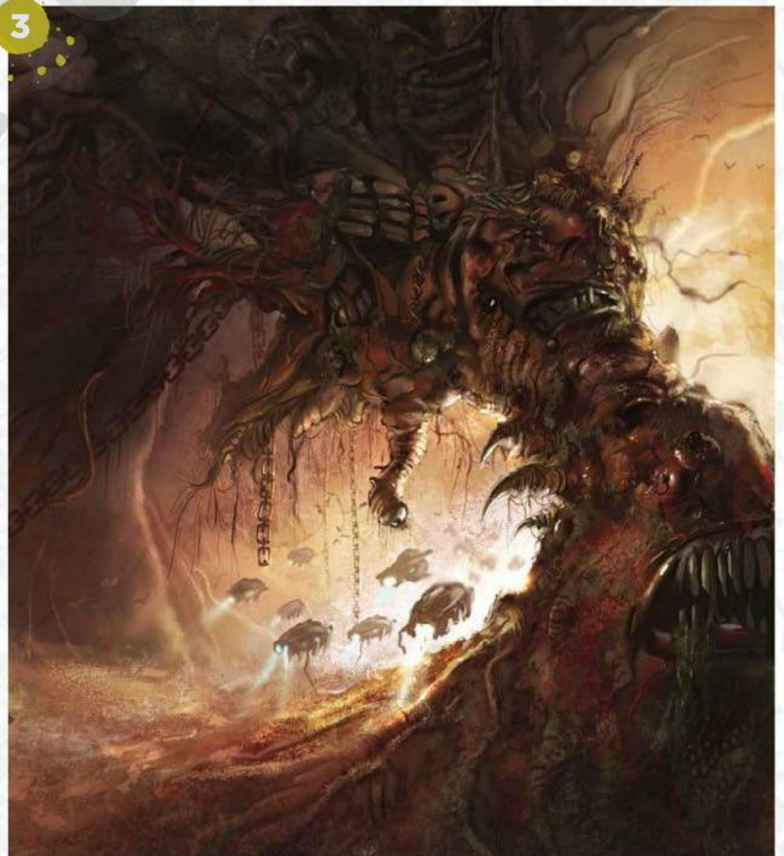
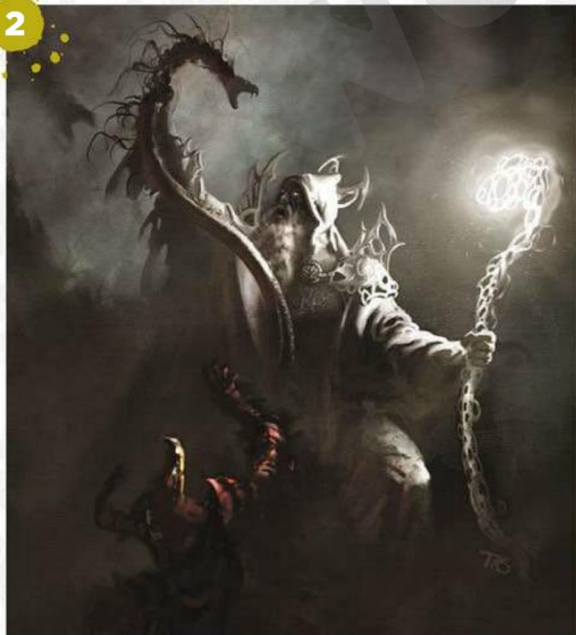
"Normal Earth life has always kind of bored me," says Trevor. "I've always been more interested in the alien, the fantastic."

Keen to follow his passions, Trevor attended the Academy of Art University, and it was during those four years that he learnt about digital art and how to look at his work critically. "I encourage anyone doubting if they should or could be an artist to look into it further," he says, "I was set on a path to improvement, which I hope to always stay on."

1 SNOWMANCER "This was done for the Character of the Week Challenge on ConceptArt.org, which is something I try to participate in as much as I can. The wizard of ice and snow conjures an imposing frost drake with freezing breath that can make ice sculptures out of his enemies."

2 LIGHT MAGE "Another image done for the Character of the Week Challenge. The mage of Light has just obtained a coveted staff from a Dark mage, but light and dark just aren't getting along."

3 NO TURNING BACK "I was trying to convey the most horrifying thing I could think of. And these explorers have unknowingly stumbled upon it: 'Did that hill over there just blink!?'"



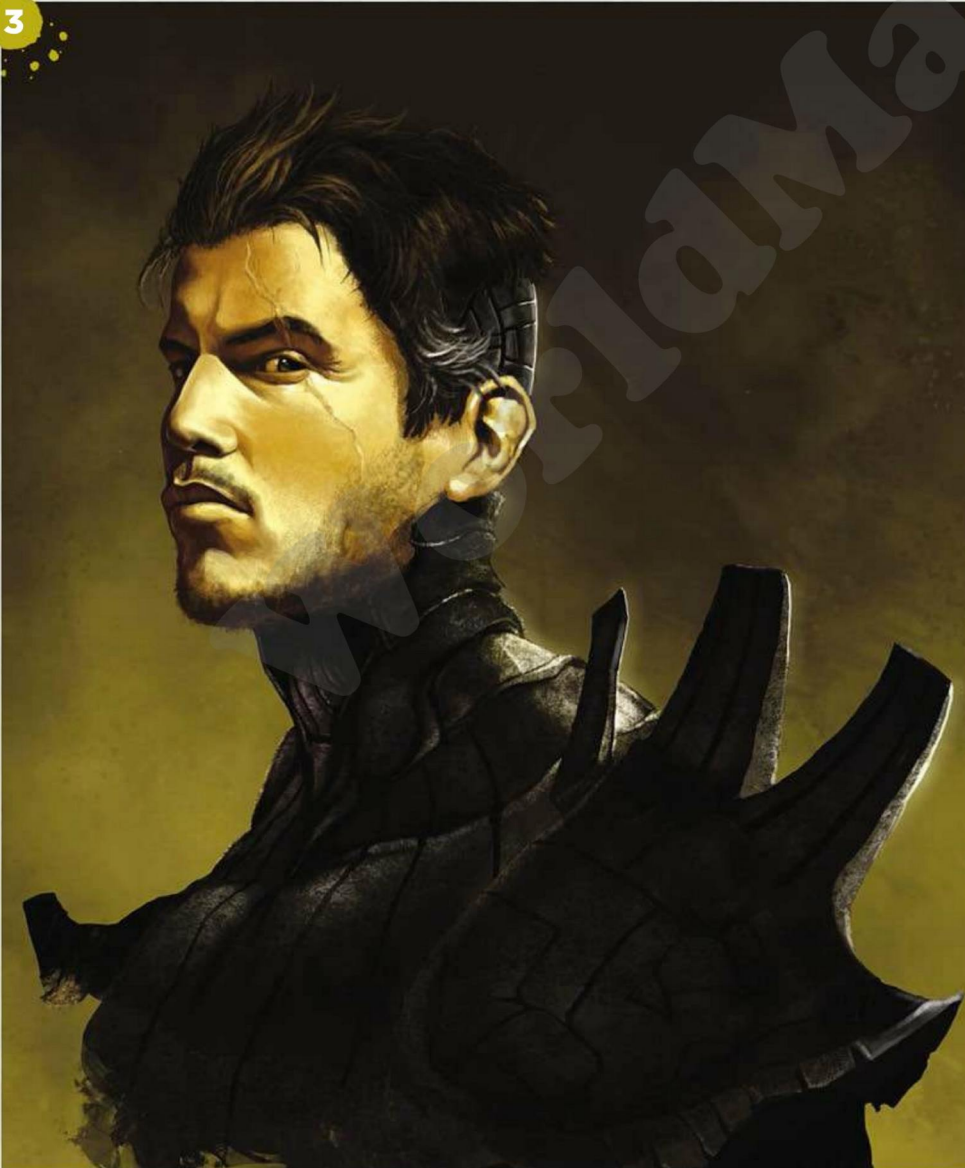


2



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3



Emile Denis

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Emile grew up discovering fantasy within the worlds of video games, and decided that he had to work in that universe.

"After obtaining a degree in illustration I started as an illustrator working for Paizo Publishing on the Pathfinder series," he tells us, "and on various other projects, mostly role-playing games, for French publishers."

Coming to digital relatively late in his artistic career, Emile swapped his traditional techniques for the way of the pixel. "Since I started working on my tablet I haven't touched a paint brush," he says. "It's in this medium that I continue to explore the limitless universe that I entered as a child."

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I love how Emile has captured the essence of an anti-Disney genie. Dark shadows, strong contrast and a selective colour palette create a bold and striking portrait. Using simple lines to capture movement is a great embellishment."

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

1 GENIE "Here's a darker and more realistic version of the famous blue genie from Disney's Aladdin. I wanted to find a cult character and reinterpret him. The genie was the ideal choice: like many Disney characters he has specific features such as the blue skin and his face, yet he remains recognisable even if he's pictured with different clothes and accessories."

2 SO WE MEET AGAIN "This resulted from a commission for the 17th issue of the magazine Kobold Quarterly. The aim was to represent a confrontation between a heroine and a bad guy in a dark and fantastic style. I worked on the ambience of the piece, then I put my two characters, and finally, I added colour and painted the magic effects such as the mage's summoning circle."

3 HIGH COMMANDER "I love portraits, and that's why I decided to focus on a bust with a sci-fi angle. It took me about 12 hours to finish; however, it was a rewarding experience, especially on the use of brushes and textures."

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1

1 **Lisa Jenkins**

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



After gaining a degree in animation and new media production, Lisa realised that her real passion lay in illustration, and took the leap to follow that path. "I learned most of my digital painting skills through tutorials offered by some of my favourite artists," she says, "along with much practice and experimentation."

Her paintings usually focus on sci-fi and fantasy themes, but are also inspired by fashion, fantasy novels and game art.

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Some traditional themes and ideas are lifted in Lisa's paintings by her attention to her character's detailing. I love the idea of a fashion-conscious assassin who wants to impress with her outfits as she dispatches her victims."

Ian Dean,
Deputy Editor

2



3

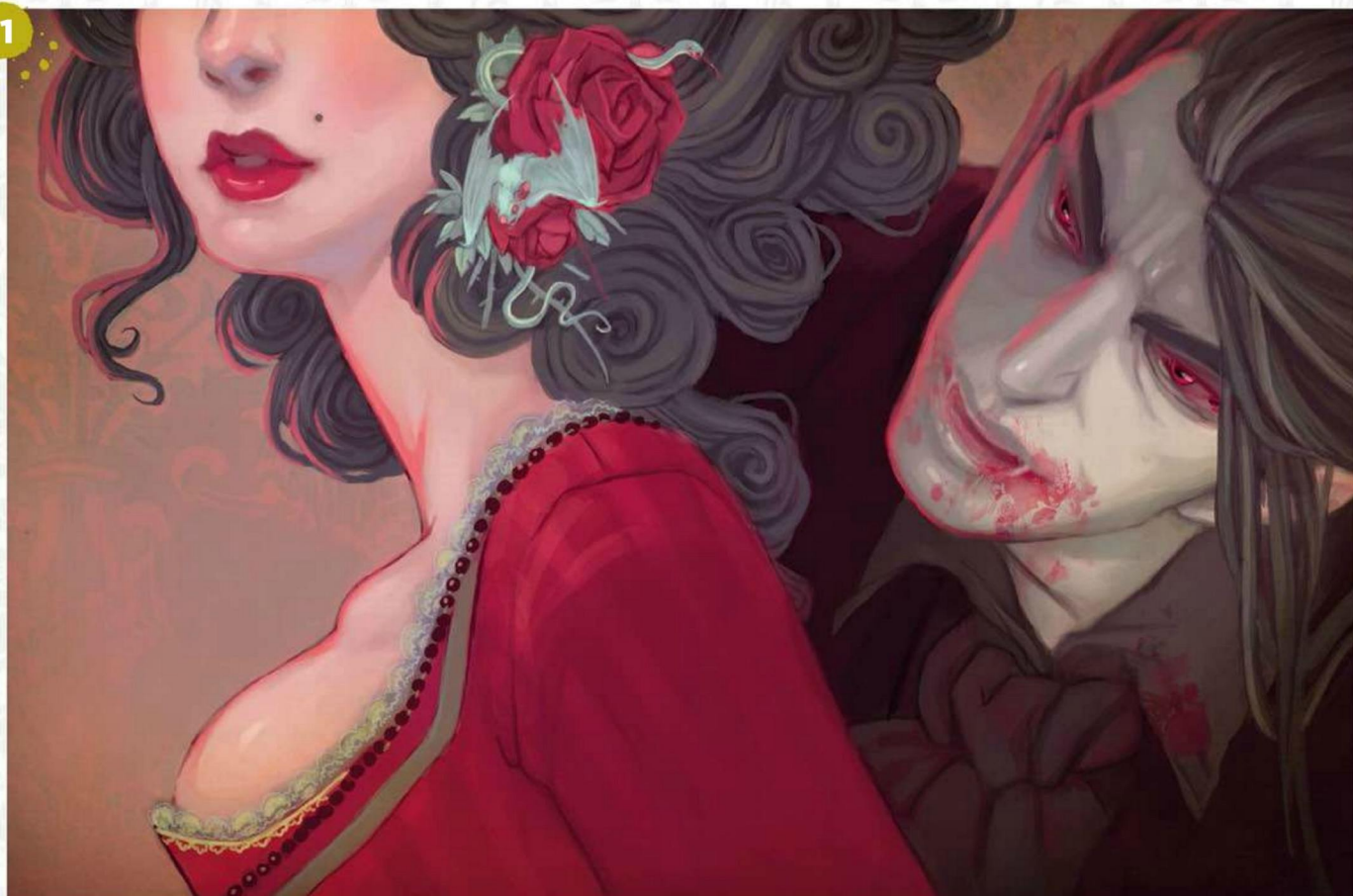


1 FAEWOODS "A forest fae, protecting the Faewoods with her faithful wolf companion. Despite the wood's barren appearance, wildlife is starting to bloom in the old woods. I wanted the painting to feel serene through the use of colour and the setting."

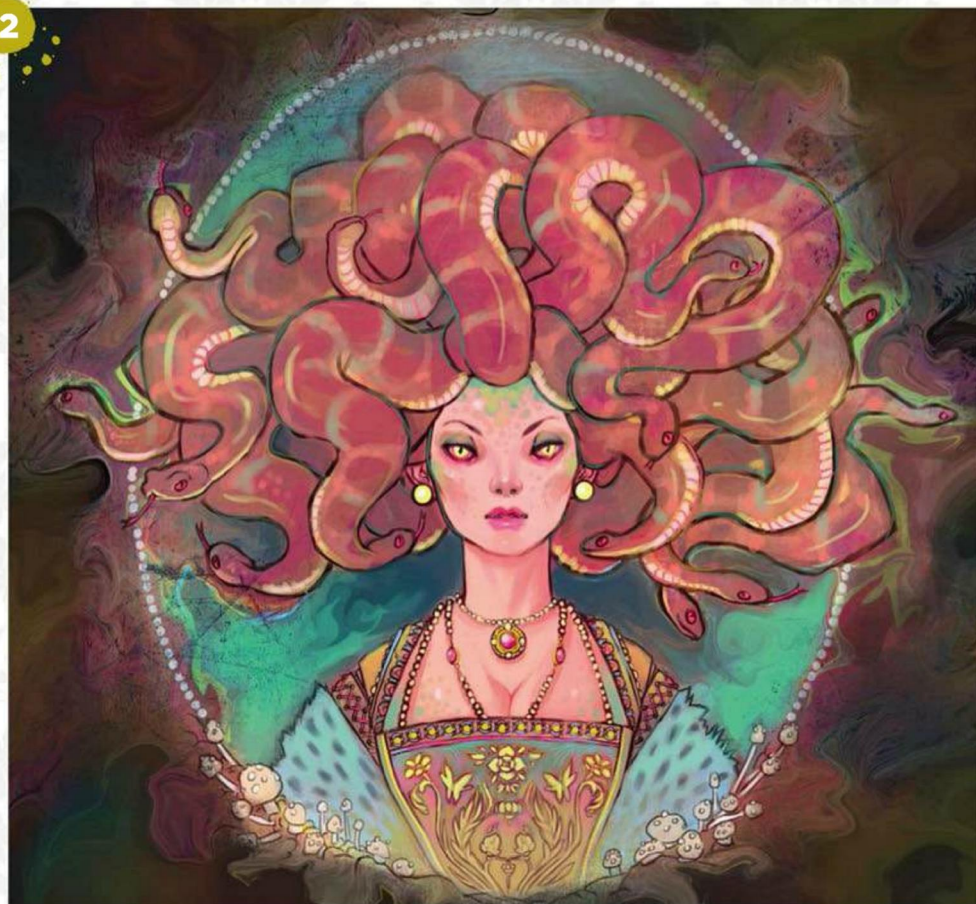
2 FASHION ASSASSIN "I wanted to depict a futuristic assassin who's deadly but fashionable. Her costume is inspired by haute couture and avant-garde fashion. The weapons are incorporated into her outfit: her chained daggers are an extension of her bracelets, while daggers are embedded in her heels."

3 DESIRES DANCE "This painting was inspired by Moroccan and Arabian culture with the incorporation of fantasy elements. The dancer's alluring beauty and the warm, inviting setting she dances within draws the viewer into her world. I spent some time on the painting's intricate details, ranging from her unique jewellery to the gold embroidery on her clothing."

1



2



Kindra Tia Haugen

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Kindra is a graduate of Ringling College of Art and Design, having first tried digital painting in high school after discovering that many of her favourite illustrations of the time had been made in Photoshop. "That inspired me to join 38 Studios a year after my graduation," she says, "where I became part of the team creating the fantasy MMORPG codenamed Copernicus."

In addition to her day job Kindra hopes to continue doing freelance work for books, cards games, and anything else she can get her hands on.

3

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Kindra's subdued colour palette works perfectly with her delicate, dream-like style. The pinks and reds she uses almost glow off the page, making the themes of lust and seduction in her work all the more intense and intriguing."

Shona Cutt,
Designer

1 CHERRY LIPS "This is an illustration I did for my college thesis: a full jacket book cover for Bram Stoker's Dracula. I wanted this to appeal to young-adult readers while bringing some of the menace back into the vampire genre. The creatures in the woman's hair are meant to be hidden - something you see only after the first glance."

2 MEDUSA "I was inspired by the miniature portraits of the Tudor Era of England and psychedelic-style illustrations. This was mostly an experimental piece done on a whim: I wanted to try new colour schemes and different effects using textures and the Liquefy tool."

3 AFTERGLOW "The voodoo loa Ezili Freda (the Haitian equivalent of Aphrodite) and one of her many lovers loa Ogoun, god of metalworking and battle. This is another one of my self-indulgent illustrations - like a cupcake, it's frivolous, sugary and so satisfying for me."

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Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

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“Art Nouveau opened my eyes to seeing similarities across all disciplines of art”

John Tyler Christopher





GOING CRAZY FOR ART

New kids on the UK comics block, Beserker, venture into the online world, with a team of comic art greats, including Glenn Fabry, in their batting line-up. **Page 23**



A FINE BODY OF WORK

Anatomy expert Marshall Vandruff gives us a rare glimpse into his creative hub where he teaches the artists of tomorrow with the skills of the old masters. **Page 24**



MOVE OVER BATMAN...

...it's time for the Boy Wonder to take centre stage - and become the Girl Wonder! Anything's possible at Chicago's Figurative Illustration Workshop. **Page 29**

Opposite page: Marvel artist John Tyler Christopher is inspired by Mucha's 'elegance of line.'



Left-right: Daniela Uhlig's female nude and Echo Chernik's feathered man both share Art Nouveau's principle characteristics.



New ART

Mucha magic One practitioner of the Art Nouveau movement influenced modern-day comic and fantasy art. What can Alphonse Mucha teach you?



"I truly believe Mucha was a comic artist before comics existed," says Marvel artist John Tyler Christopher, whose Art Nouveau-inspired images include Iron Man, Poison Ivy and Witchblade. "The obvious thing most people take away from Art Nouveau is the elegance of line, the cleanliness of the design, but I really dug the composition, repetition of metashapes and the use of open space offset by complex and detailed designs. It opened my eyes to seeing similarities across all disciplines of art."

Of course Art Nouveau, or new art if you will, is an overarching term for the style of decorative art popular during 1890-1910. But it's Czech artist Alphonse Mucha who many of today's comic and fantasy artists see as a shining influence. And not just because of his sublime work. It's widely known that Mucha didn't care a lot for his commercial work - the ads he created he saw purely as a means to pay the bills. But his commercial work is some of his most celebrated. Can any parallels be drawn between this and today's comic and fantasy artists?

John thinks so. "Besides the obvious stylist and technical education [studying Mucha] gave me, it also gave me a very Warholian view of art. That commercial art can in fact have the same weight and appreciation as fine art. The commissions of the past, become the masterpieces of the future."

Echo Chernik, an artist heavily influenced by the work of Mucha, explains what she believes can be learnt stylistically from the artist: "Mucha's lithographic contributions came in his superior line quality, his juxtaposition of organic and geometric forms, his typography and his ability to apply that sensibility to all media. He created art first, and forced the medium to his will. He did this for sculpture, painting, furniture, jewellery, architecture, everything. Very few artists have been allowed that broad a stroke in their careers."

She continues: "Mucha's distinct geometric backgrounds and rose windows were part of a Victorian arts and crafts movements that eventually evolved into Art Deco. His utilisation of flowing fabric and drapery was definitely an influence in fantasy art today."

ARTIST INSIGHT

ECHO CHERNIK

The Art Nouveau artist on Mucha's legacy and fascination

What do you find so fascinating about the Mucha style?

I think what I enjoy most about the style is the organic, flowing nature of the hair and drapery. The expressive and idealised placement of hands, feet and decorative objects lends itself to the illusion of the idealisation of beauty. I enjoy playing with perceptions of depth, detailed and symbolic elements, as well as ornate and intricate border elements intrinsic to the style.

Where would contemporary fantasy art be without the likes of Mucha?

Although Mucha's complicated, decorative style was an artistic rebellion against the Industrial Age, the reason we all remember him today is because he was the best at using the latest technologies available to him - to create the most organic art.

Comic books were primarily a lithographic art. It's not that artists looked to Mucha for inspiration first - they couldn't afford to produce and reproduce paintings fast enough for the marketplace, so lithography, or rather photolithography by that time, was the only way to go. After that settled, Mucha stands out as one of the masters who artists had to study to learn their craft. By that alone, he was destined to influence comic art.

Fantasy art, on the other hand, was widely published during Mucha's day with many contemporary Art Nouveau lithographers still well known to fans and collectors today - Arthur Rackham, for example. It's important for artists to study the Mucha style and understand the foundations behind it.



Echo is an American Art Nouveau artist and illustrator who has worked in the worlds of publishing and advertising.

www.echo-x.com

Continued from previous page...



Echo Chernik's Dragon's Lair takes Mucha into classic fantasy waters.

Daniela Uhlig, an artist who recently paid homage to Mucha in a series of risqué nudes, explains what she believes studying his work can teach

contemporary artists: "The flow of his compositions, his display of the female form, the floral elements, the ornaments and so on all make up one intricate design. Mucha makes it look so balanced and elegant, light and easy. In my series, I wanted to see what it feels like to work in this style and see how well it mixes with my personal style."

So, where would modern fantasy art be without Mucha? John has some thoughts on the matter: "The influence of Mucha, and artists like him, are felt not only in comics, but in other facets of modern fantasy. If you pick up a copy of any fantasy game or movie that has elves or some other elfish-like race, there's a really good chance that their architecture and costuming is heavily influenced [by Mucha]."

"It's hard to say what fantasy art would be like without their influence, but I think Art Nouveau has had a real hand in adding beauty and elegance into modern fantasy. Without it, I think on the surface things might be similar; but we would lose a sense of grace in our design and detail." We couldn't have said it better ourselves...

Win! A leather-bound Exotique 7 art book

Competition Your chance to win one of 10 special edition Exotique 7 art books

To celebrate Ballistic Publishing's most recent art book release, we're offering ImagineFX readers the chance to win one of 10 leather-bound copies of Exotique 7. Enjoy the most beautiful digital art of today like never before.

These great books aren't available in your local book store, so for your chance to get your hands on a copy answer the following question correctly.

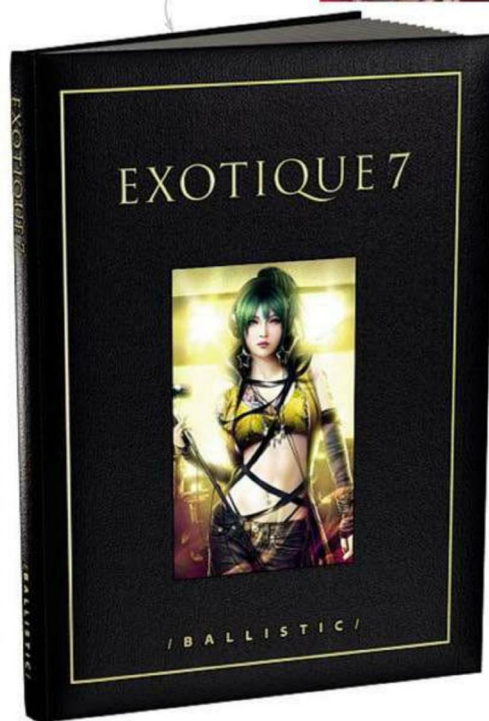
On this page you'll find two fantastic digital images from previous editions of Exotique, but who is the cover artist of Exotique 7's special edition? (Hint: you may find a clue here: www.bit.ly/ifx-ballistic)

- A Mario Wibisono
- B Craig Mullins
- C Chester Ocampo

Go to www.futurecomps.co.uk/ifx-exotique, select your answer and give us all your information in the fields provided. Competition closes 9 February 2012. For a full set of competition rules go to www.imaginefx.com/comp_rules. Good luck!



© Bobby Chu



© Kojo Yamagami

Competition rules: By taking part in a Competition, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules, which can be viewed in full at www.imaginefx.com/comp_rules. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Proof of posting shall not be deemed proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. The Competition is open to readers worldwide who are 18 years and over, except: (i) employees of Future Publishing and its group companies and any members of their households, and (ii) any party involved in the Competition, or any member of their households.

Monster-in-waiting

Long time coming Pascal Barret reveals his concepts for a nasty character that's mellowed with age



The delay from concept art to finished product can be quite lengthy on some projects. Take artist Pascal Barret's contribution to the animated movie A Monster in Paris. He was asked to work on the titular character back in 2006. The film was released this October.

In fact, French director Bibi Bergeron (Shark Tale, The Road to El Dorado) asked him to re-work the monster concept having chanced upon Pascal's blog, appreciating some of his quirkier creatures. "Bibi asked me to work on this character, Francoeur the monster," says Pascal today. "I was given three weeks and very little information about how he should look."

In the end Pascal relied on his background in creating compelling creature designs. "I stayed very close to my style," he says, "and although my version of Francoeur is



Pascal's take on Monster in Paris's titular character was a tad too dark for the filmmakers.

much more horrible and nasty than the finished one, there are still some details that remain."

You can see some more of Pascal's creepy monster designs on his blog: www.bit.ly/ifx-monster.

Art on demand

Mad for it New kids on the UK comics block, Berserker, venture into the online world, with a team of comic art greats in their corner

Building on the success of its UK art studio that opened in 2008, Berserker Studios launched a new website in November.



It offers original prints, commissions, loads of fantastic art and, for a limited time, Glenn Fabry is also offering cover recreations, including prints of his legendary Preacher covers. "But we're only able to provide one version of each cover," says site coordinator David Withers, "so the offer is extremely limited."

If you can excuse the slightly primitive website layout there's plenty of comic sketches, finished paintings and sundry goodies to keep you interested here. No doubt it'll also be the first place you'll hear, and see, more about Berserker's most recent project 13 Coins, with interior art work provided by Simon Bisley.

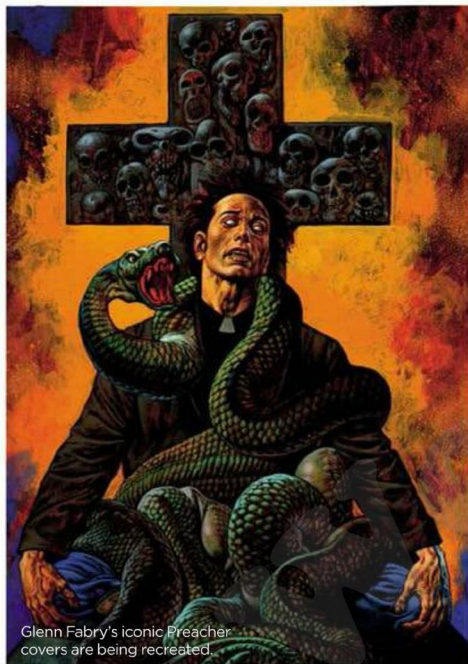
When asked what will make the site a success, there's no hesitation in David's answer. "We're honoured to exclusively represent Glenn Fabry, Nate van Dyke and Greg Staples and we offer commissions from Greg, Glenn, Nate and Simon Bisley," he says. The site also provides information on current projects and other services available from Berserker Studios. "Our highly skilled team can also provide comic book colouring, inking, lettering, book/graphic design, publication and printing. We're really going for an all-around approach."

And there's room for more artists in the Berserker clan. "We're always keen to expand our roster of represented artists and we're currently open to submissions by artists that want representation, and who want to sell through the site," says David.

Check the site out: www.berserkercomicart.com.



Pages like this original 1988 2000 AD strip by Simon Bisley are on sale in the new Berserker website.



Glenn Fabry's iconic Preacher covers are being recreated.



Glenn also provided cover art for this angry green fellow in 2011.

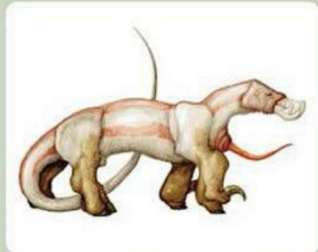
This original Greg Staples Halo cover is currently for sale.





+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART...



Nemo Ramjet

www.nemo-ramjet.deviantart.com

The past can offer limitless inspiration, and that's something Nemo's well aware of. He draws slender line drawings of dinosaurs and fabricated, yet scientifically deft, dino-creations. There's the odd alien here and there, but the real appeal is the brilliant paleo-art.



Naomi Baker

www.naomiful.deviantart.com

There's a raw, quick-fire attitude to all of Naomi's sketches and finished paintings on her dA site. Whether it's a flurry of wild colour and action, or a pensive black and white character study, every image demands your attention - especially her sketch of a skateboarding Samurai.



Grace Liu

www.nightblue-art.deviantart.com

Grace has a knack for writing engaging 'diary' entries on her deviantART site, documenting her on-going relationship with an all-consuming passion for art. Her art is full of energy, drama and intricate detail implied in a loose, dynamic style.

My whiteboard reminds me of what's important.

My favourite art's always changing, but a few, like this Rick Griffin, seem to come back year after year.

The weather is nice in southern California, so I usually leave the window open.



Books piled everywhere. I have more books than a young person could use in a lifetime, and I ran out of shelf space a decade ago. One room is filled with piles of them, but I'm not including that picture.



Marshall Vandruff

Flat cat Marshall gives us a rare glimpse into his creative hub, where he teaches the artists of tomorrow with the skills of the old masters



I'm a stay-at-home person. For 20 years I made my living in my airbrush studio. It was a mess of equipment and paint dust. I never liked airbrushing, but illustration paid well and I loved spending time alone in my studio.

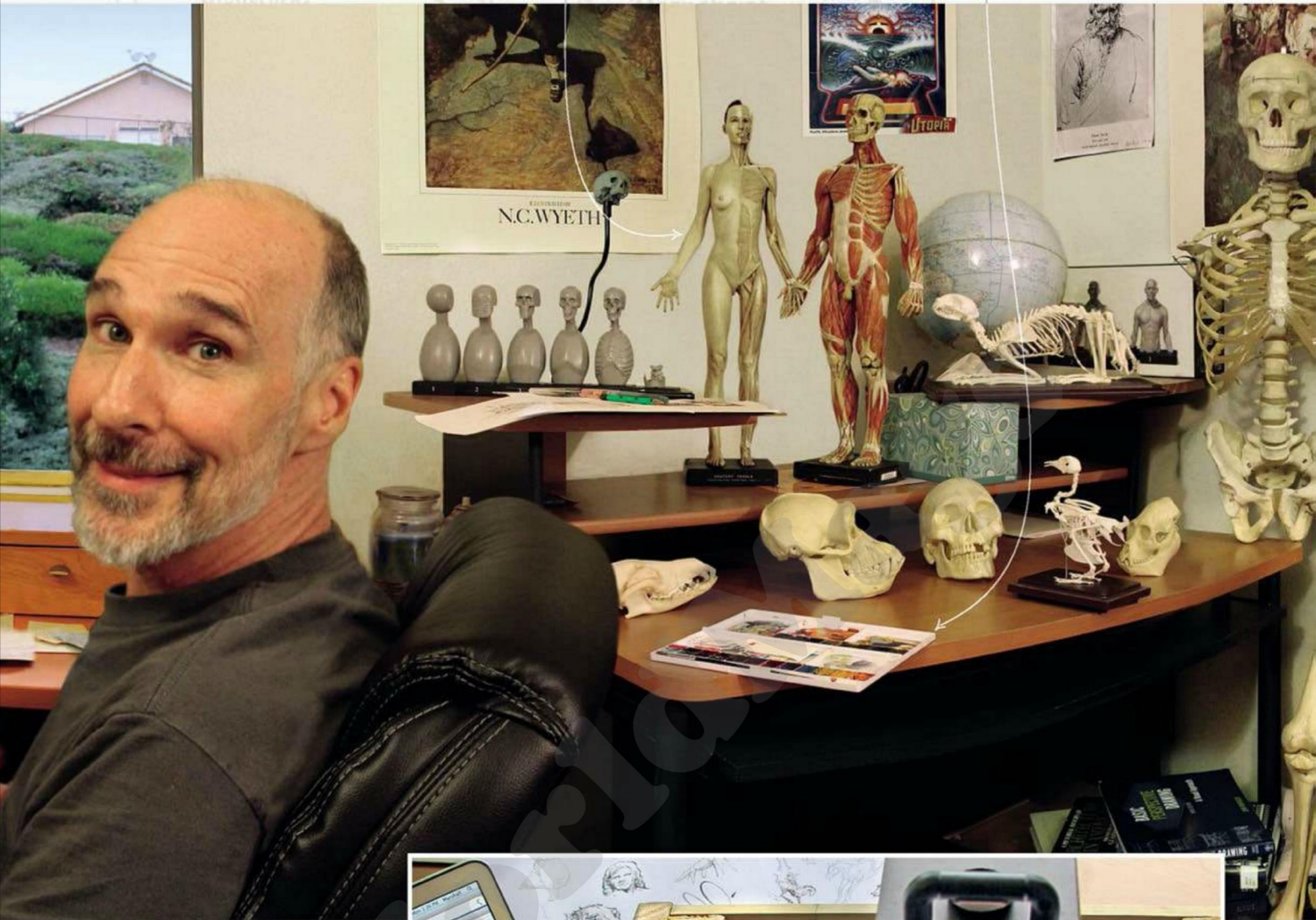
It was never lonely, though. I had a headset phone and talked with friends about art and life, working out thoughts

about religion and politics, telling stories, singing songs, and enjoying a rich social life.

It felt great to be a professional. But I wanted more. I wanted to draw people and animals from imagination, like the old masters. I wanted to tell stories but didn't know how to get my ideas into form. I wanted to find out how some creative professionals grow more creative as they grow older. I found out through teaching.

I have boxes of bones, but I keep a few skulls, my dear old skeleton Barney, and Andrew Cawrse's Anatomy Tools references where I can see them, and show them to students.

This watercolour palette is my only paint media – I love its quickness.



At 26 I began teaching part-time in colleges. I did it to study my favourite artists and organise their wisdom into lessons. For 27 years I've been building that treasure chest of teaching material to share in classes, but now with a difference: I teach online, from home. My students are in England, Austria, India, Australia, Russia, Finland, Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam, and all over the US. I'm here in a California suburb, teaching storytelling, demonstrating drawing and singing to my students.

It's a lot like spending several hours a day on the phone, but it includes pictures, video demos, internet tours, guest lecturers from other parts of the world, and more resources than we can use in a lifetime.

I love this job. I get to teach all over the world from my studio, and train new talent in the skills of old masters.

Marshall teaches online through www.theartdepartment.org. If you want to be on his mailing list for classes, contact him through his website at www.marshallart.com.



I like to work small, so I built this little camera mount to focus directly down for my drawing demos. This picks up a lot of detail, so nothing is lost for anyone on the other end of the world looking in.

In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists

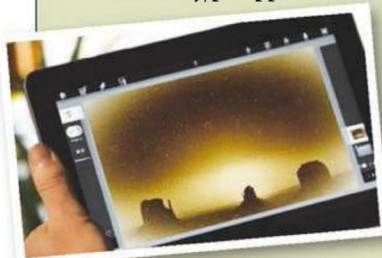


Year One Classic

Frank Miller and artist David Mazzucchelli's classic origin story, *Batman: Year One*, is getting the deluxe treatment, with a hardcover designed by the notorious Chip Kidd. There's unreleased Mazzucchelli Batman art and loads more at: www.bit.ly/bat-one.

Adobe Android

Adobe Touch Apps are now available on the Android market. There are six new creative apps, including Photoshop Touch. In combination with Creative Cloud, this offers access to files anytime on your tablet. Here's more: www.adobe.ly/ph-app.



Update Concepts

Francis Tsai has been a busy boy, recently relaunching the website for his studio, Magnus Rex. The site has all his recent projects, from Sucker Punch concepts to keyframe art for the Bourne video game. There's loads of great new art to see: www.magnusrex.com.



One vision

Art book After 15 years spent creating compelling art for the film industry, Craig Elliott is releasing a book of more personal pieces

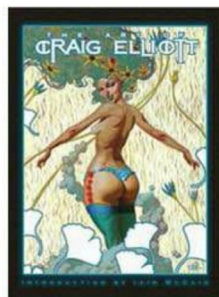
For his fifth art book, released through Fleck Publications in January 2012, Craig Elliott was more involved than most artists. "I did all the design and layout," he tells us, "which apparently is a first for the publishers."



Considering the breadth of personal pieces of art that this prolific artist has created, it was probably a good thing that the mammoth task of selecting images didn't fall to someone else. "I have many more paintings and drawings than would ever fit into one book," Craig says, "so I chose art to match thematically and artistically with the drawings in surrounding pages."

With a good few years working in the film industry, Craig has brought a sense of 'flow' to the book's design. "Each set of images has matching colour schemes, or themes - flow and the continuity of the thread that runs through something sequential, like a book or movie, is important to me." For more details, visit www.craigelliottgallery.com.

Craig Elliott's fifth art book is full of his trademark paintings of women.



"This one's mostly brown pencil on sepia-stained paper with white pencil highlights," says Craig. "The lighter tone that separates her skin colour from the rest of the image is washed with a bit of gouache."

Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

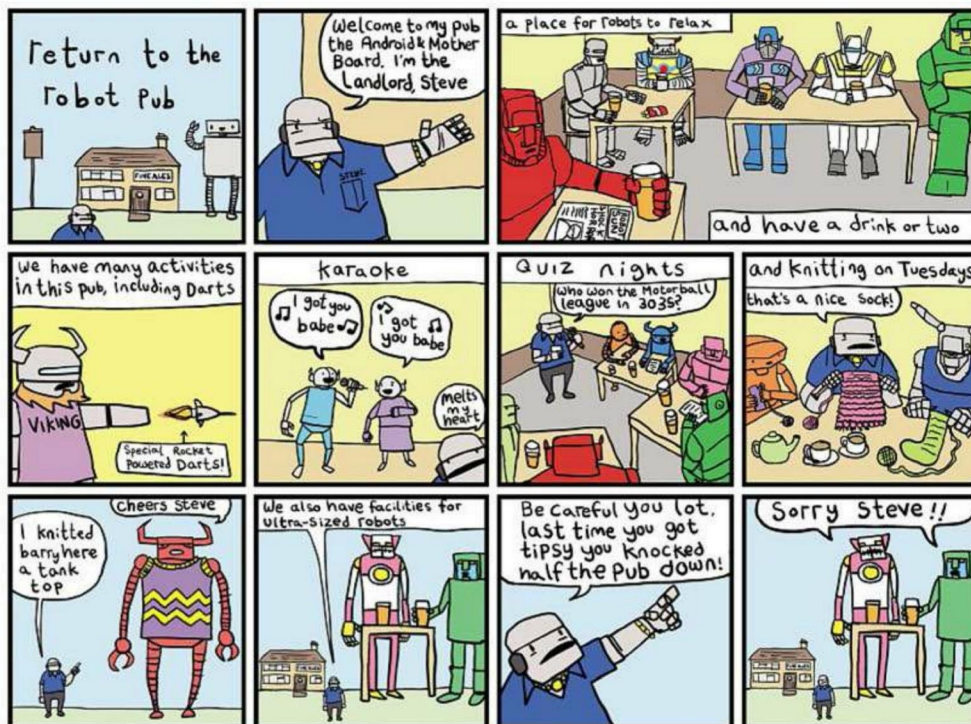
"Big and moist lips are sexy... a slightly open mouth is sexier. But the key to painting sexy lips is to... think about how they make you feel."

Don't know about you, but we need a cold shower. Paco Rico Torres on painting hot lips... See page 39



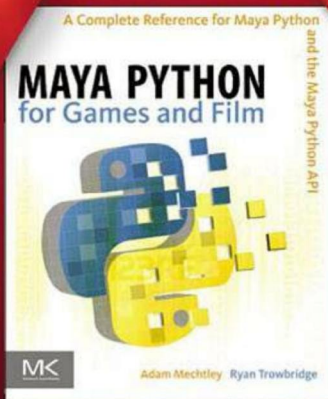
Life is Humiliation

by Matt Boyce



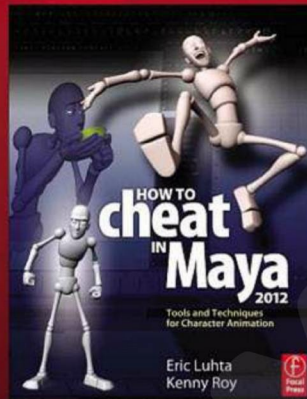
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WITH FOCAL THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



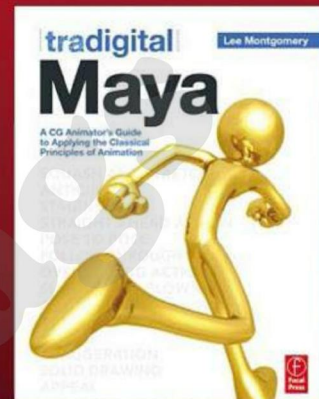
**By Adam Mechtley
and Ryan Trowbridge**
\$59.95

The first book to focus exclusively on how to implement Python with Maya - a complete reference for Maya Python and the Maya Python API.



**By Eric Luhta
and Kenny Roy**
\$44.95

This is an animator's workflow with complete, step-by-step walkthroughs of essential animation techniques to increase your efficiency and speed.



By Lee Montgomery
\$49.95

Explore Disney's 12 principles of animation - from squash and stretch to timing and appeal, while learning how to animate in Maya.

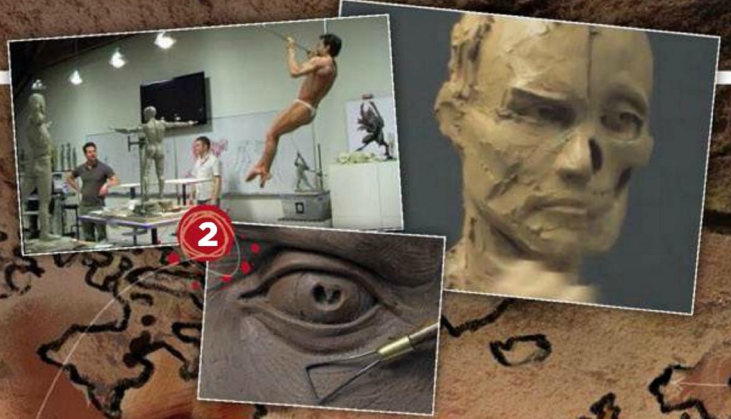
For a look at our holiday titles, visit www.focalpress.com/holiday



Creativity has an endless shelf life.

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PLANET OF THE ARTS



HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF THE EVENTS AND ART BLOGS THAT HAVE GOT US IN A STIR THIS MONTH. IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY OR EVENT THAT SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, SEND US THE DETAILS: PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM. CHEERS!

Beren

Beren Neale, Staff Writer



AXE COP

Webcomic | US

1 Axe Cop is a neat collaboration between brothers – an infant with ideas and an artist with bags of talent. This irreverent stream-of-consciousness comic is well worth a look. www.bit.ly/ifx-axe

ANATOMY TOOLS

Various artists | US

2 Okay, this is primarily a site to buy anatomy figures and various online workshops. But there are so many demos and video tasters here it'll be well worth your while to visit. www.anatomytools.com

GOLDEN AGE COMIC BOOK STORIES

Mr Door Tree | US

3 This is a startling celebration of classic comics that's regularly updated. Random picks: 1960s Frazetta and Virgil Finlay. www.bit.ly/ifx-gold

ANDREAS HÅNDLYKKEN

Concept artist | Norway

4 A dab hand at 3D modelling, Andreas's 2D concepts and character designs are the main pull here. From oozing dragons to blue Madoosas, there's plenty to enjoy. www.skullsong.com

4



5



6



NIKO GEYER
Illustrator | Germany

5 Working on book illustrations and game art, this is where Niko's day job blends with his personal work. Loads of great manga style art and some wicked characters.
www.nikogeyer.blogspot.com

GUIDO KUIP
Concept artist | Netherlands

6 Dealing with dark interpretations of national fairy tales, Guido also offers loads of brainstorm sketches – sprawling and fascinating. Then there are those amazing illustrations!
www.guidokuip.blogspot.com

map art by Jonny Duddle,
www.duddlebug.com

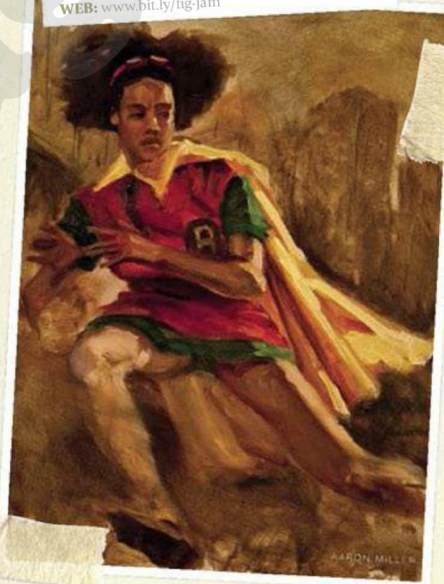
SKETCH JAM

Figurative Illustration Workshop offers Chicago illustrators themed costumes and props for real-life drawing.



Figurative Illustration Workshop

LOCATION: Platform Studios, Chicago, US
WHEN: Mid/end of the month
WEB: www.bit.ly/fig-jam



Organiser Aaron B Miller's offering, above, from a recent Robin-inspired workshop.

Right, regular Blue Caldwell gets to grips with the cross-dressing sidekick at the group's most recent meeting.



Bomb! Mike Yates adds a little danger to his stylised take on the Boy Wonder.

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Forum Winners

Image of the month

Laugh your head off Drawing from what you know and love – however gross – always pays off in the ImagineFX forum challenges...



Shane Cook won his ImagineFX forum challenge this year, but the roots of his fascination in the sinister brethren of the church of mirth go back a long way.

"I doodled evil-looking clowns on the sides of notebooks to gross out my brother Emile," he says. "My interest comes from an episode of Extreme Ghostbusters I watched as a kid, featuring clowns that would scare the snot out of most adults." The episode featured some awesome/gruesome concept art in the credits that also had a big influence on the young artist. It seems he was always destined to win, depicting his favourite subject.

MYFX TITLE: Send in the Clowns

WINNER: Shane Cook (Slaine69)

GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/slaine69



"Would you like me to juggle some heads for you, kids?" You wouldn't expect this chap to get a lot of children's party work.



Shane certainly wasn't clowning around when he depicted this terrifying circus entertainer. The image put us off our lunch. And dinner.

FORUM CRIT



"I think this image is superb. The texture, detail... and I especially love the feeling of light from behind. Simple but effective! The detail on the faces around the belt is also wonderful. That clown is one nasty-looking SOB. Brilliant!"

Warren Lee (Thulsadoom)

Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/myfx

MYFX TITLE: The End
WINNER: Warren Lee (Thulsadoom)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/thulsadoom



"I wanted to represent the end of the world in a less-dramatic way, without the usual fire and disaster. So I chose to have an iconic structure surrounded by water with a single figure overlooking, to emphasise the hopelessness. I decided on the pyramids, because of their familiar and contrasting sandy location. For speed I kept to a specific tone and completed the painting in around four hours."



MYFX TITLE: Witch's Familiar
WINNER: Marie Deslauriers (Heimdayel)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/heimdayel



"From the start I knew I wanted to paint a bird, but not the too-common crow or raven. It was tricky to give it an occult feeling without having to show the witch herself, as many did for this challenge. In the end her staff, some runes and a pentagram worked just as well."



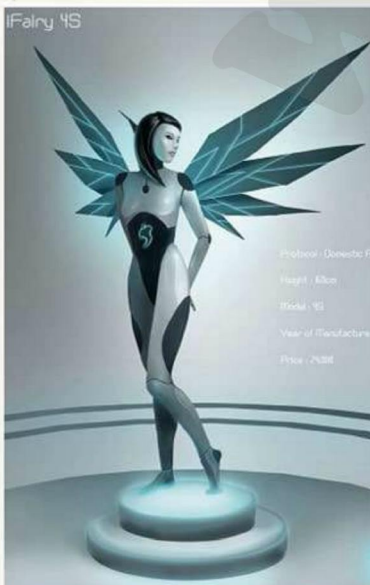
MYFX TITLE: New M-apple Product
WINNER: Alexander Tooth (Alextooth)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/alextooth



"I really love cyber stuff, bots and so on, and so I thought the fictional company M-apple in this challenge would almost certainly dabble in this area in the future. This is an automated household assistant!"

MYFX TITLE: Star Wars - Design a Ship
WINNER: Alexander Tooth (Alextooth)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/alextooth

"I really want to convey the dry heat and dust of Tatooine with this piece. The rust and bashed-up feel of everything was also designed to fit well with the theme."



Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, **Claire Howlett**, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK



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Case for text-free covers

I just wanted to say that I love ImagineFX. I always look forward to reading the latest copy – so much so that I subscribed. Which brings to the reason that I'm writing to you. In issue 76 I was pretty surprised by a comment on the Letters page [reader David wanted subscribers to receive covers with words on them] and I have to say that I completely disagree with him. I love the clean layout of the front cover. Has this person never heard the phrase, "A picture speaks a thousand words"?

When I purchase an art book I don't like text ruining the front cover and I feel the same about ImagineFX. I love the fact that each month when I receive my magazine the front cover is just the beautiful piece of artwork for all to see. One of my many favourite covers would have to be the creature issue. I loved that I could see all of the little creatures that Bobby Chiu had beautifully created and I was glad that there wasn't any text in the way.

As far as the reader's comments about text-free covers being a lesser product and gimmicky, well, that's completely ridiculous. I think you'll get more people wanting to subscribe because it's a clean

Subscribers got to see Bobby Chiu's artwork, which we commissioned for our fantasy creature issue, free of coverlines.



DID YOU MISS ISSUE 77?

We've still got a few copies left, but you need to move fast! See page 51 for details on how to get hold of one.

image. I wish the ImagineFX covers were always like this – even in the shops.

Your magazine inspires, helps and gives up-and-coming artists the chance to show off their work and their fantastic skills. And if you don't like the clean cover don't subscribe – buy ImagineFX from the shop.

Harmony Richards, via email

I'm just reading issue 76 (which I received in October although it says it's December's issue). Anyway, some crazy guy likes coverlines on subscriber covers. Please don't consider changing it. I can't believe what I'm reading. How could anyone prefer words over art? Is it really so hard opening the first page? Horses for courses I suppose, but I just wanted to add a voice in opposition of that guy. Anyway, cheers for the great mag!

James O'Reilly

Claire replies Well, Harmony and James are just two readers who wrote in to say we shouldn't change our subscriber covers (I loved Bobby Chiu's creature subscriber cover too, Harmony). We also posted a poll on Facebook and deviantART on the subject, and the readers voted overwhelmingly to keep the word-free covers. So, David [letters issue 76] and a handful of others have been out-voted. Sorry guys, but majority rules! Oh, and for those who haven't seen the word-free covers that subscribers receive, turn to page 34.

Adverts are a balancing act

ImagineFX has always been like biting into a juicy apple. I've always admired you and your team at ImagineFX. Okay, artists and art aside, this magazine itself is a work of art, the font used; the position of the text and the colours (just to scrape the top of the surface). It's truly unique from the other magazines I have read in my past. One of the things I admire the most about ImagineFX is that, unlike other magazines, you don't have advertisements on every third page. Don't get me wrong, I love advertisements from time to time (it keeps us updated) but seeing it fill more than 10 per cent of the magazine is really annoying, because more advertisements equals more pages, and more pages means it costs more to purchase the magazine.

So from my side, thank you very much for your years of hard work and dedication.

Jackie Zhang, via email

Claire replies It's not often that we get compared to a juicy apple so thanks very much! As for advertising, well, no magazine can exist without adverts, so if by flipping through pages that help you choose the right piece of hardware, software or training tailored for artists means that you'll also get to enjoy reading about your favourite artists, then it's no bad thing.



Our star letter writer wins a dA Premium Membership!

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- Customise your profile page
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- And more!

The secret to success is...

When it comes to art, I'm quite the amateur and even more so when I look at the amazing pieces that appear within this Holy Grail of a magazine. Sometimes it gets depressing and I become demotivated when I compare my art with that of other people's, which can be out of this world.

It's my final year before enrolling to university, and I recently found myself at a crossroads, trying to decide whether or not to take on an art course that could lead to a good career. After some thinking, I realised that competition is pretty fierce and it would be difficult to get a job in the industry today. But even so, I really enjoy art, having drawn since I was three. I took up digital drawing two years ago and fell in love with it, even though the results were pretty horrendous. It would be great if you could impart some advice. Practice makes perfect, I guess?

Edward Siu-Yein Tsang, via email

Claire replies Edward, I'm often asked this question and the only advice worth repeating is that success is down to you. The opportunities are out there, but it's something you'll need to work at achieving.



Here's a nifty digital piece of Edward's that he did for his A-level art, after being inspired by ImagineFX.

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Artists' opinions



"ImagineFX is the best published source of conceptual art information that I have ever seen. The magazine is a must-have investment for any aspiring concept artist who wants to take their skills to the next level."

Andrew Jones, concept artist



"ImagineFX is a unique resource for the science-fiction and fantasy community. It has invaluable tips and techniques for a range of software, and encourages aspiring artists to get their work in print and receive international exposure."

Jonny Duddle, freelance artist

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Now you can buy digital editions, whatever your platform! *Turn to page 33*



January 2012

ImagineFX



Artist Q&A

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS? LET US EASE YOUR ART-ACHE AT HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM

The FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX panel

Paco Rico Torres



Paco is a freelance illustrator living in Spain who's painted for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.

www.pacorico.blogspot.com

Mélanie Delon



Mélanie is a freelance fantasy illustrator. She works as a cover artist for several publishing houses, and on her personal artbook series.

www.melaniedelon.com

Manon



Manon is a freelance artist who specialises in fantasy, horror and portraiture. She enjoys painting drooling beasts and cute creatures.

www.artbymanon.com

Nick Harris



Gloucestershire-based Nick went digital in 2000 after 18 years' working with traditional methods. He works mainly on children's illustrations.

www.nickillus.com

Lauren K Cannon



Lauren is a freelance fantasy artist who specialises in the surreal. She lives in a small woodland village in New Jersey, US.

www.navate.com

Dave Allsop



UK-based Dave is a fantasy illustrator for Wizards of the Coast, Nightfall Games and White Wolf among others. He also works in video games.

www.daveallsop.info

Bill Corbett



Bill works as a freelance artist producing illustrations for media groups, public relations companies, small businesses, bands and private clients.

www.billcorbett.co.uk



Question How do I add texture to skin?

Darran Scott, England

Answer Manon replies



It's quite straightforward to mess up smooth skin with some texture. Use Edit>Transform and Warp to fit the shapes of the texture around the curves of the body. Never lay one on flat. You can then alter the opacity of the Overlay layer in the settings menu on the right.

I spent a lot of time on the colouring of this demon: there are many layers of textures added to this image to give it a less-smooth, digital look. When painting digitally I try to stay away from making it look like it's been painted that way. I have a

Adding texture is very easy but keep in mind the kinds of texture you're using, here I've used photos of dried mud and scales.

big file full of textures that I go back to – often returning to the same ones over and over again. I recommend collecting great textures for future art, whenever you see something suitable.

I've used two kinds of textures for the scales. As well as the cracked mud, I've gone for some animal scales from lizards to add detail in the facial areas. I find that organic shapes work best. Experiment as much as you can and remember that the final touches of wet scales or steam or drool are what gives your image that extra something – in this case, bite!

Step-by-step: Painting textured demon skin



1 Get an idea of your demon's shape before digging out some textures. I've chosen cracked mud because I find this looks great for scales. Then using it in an Overlay setting, work it all over the parts of the creature you want to be scaly, making sure you blend in all the edges. Use the Warp tool to wrap the texture to his body.



2 Add layers of colour to the demon in Overlay and build up the solid body colour behind. I use a new Overlay layer in a dark red to go over the cracks and add more to his face and body. After I'd done that I then use another Overlay layer to pick out highlights on the face in a light pale colour using a Soft Airbrush.



3 For all the fun, final details I use Overlay again with a pale green in a Soft Airbrush for the steam behind (very low opacity), and then over the top of that add a couple of flourishes with a smoke Photoshop brush on a separate layer. Make sure you pick out the light in the eyes and go to town with either the drool or blood.

Question

I'm new to ArtRage – how should I use its texture brushes?

Olivia Desmond, US

Answer

Nick replies

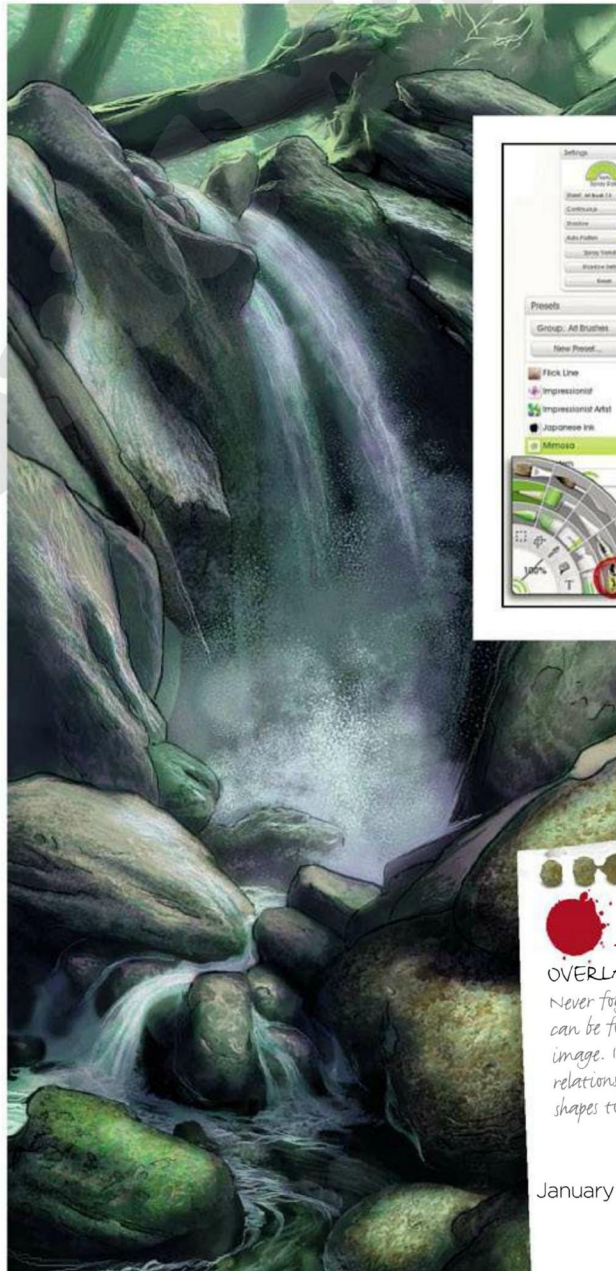


There's nothing that demands texture and scale like a waterfall painting, so I'll use this as an example to get to grips with ArtRage's options. First though, it's crucial to consider the type of waterfall you pick to tackle and how it works at whatever dpi you paint. The Spring thaw high up in the Rockies offers a vastly different waterfall to sub-tropical rain forest with its overgrown vegetation.

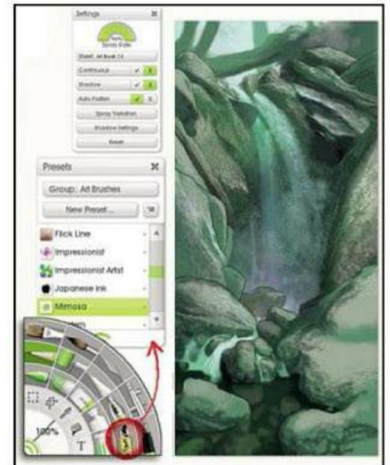
ArtRage has ample tool options to deliver the variety of mark-making for spray and splashes to represent the wild energy of any waterfall. Go for contrast where you can: the slick fluidity as water slips over smooth rocks versus the spray as it crashes into rock-faces, the power of tons of water

forced through a narrowing gorge versus the hanging mist in its aftermath. Your choice of waterfall will have a great say in what, and what not, to include.

Working from memories of Canonteign Falls in Devon (check it out at www.canonteignfalls.com) I rough out a vertical composition in the Chalk and Pencil brush selections, expanding the canvas as I see the need (Edit>Crop/Expand). I build rock textures using Stencils based on photographs that I've taken, and create light and shade using Watercolor brush washes on layers set to Multiply. I use the Chalk brush alongside Sticker brushes, Airbrush Splats, Mimosa and Sparse Bristles to paint the water textures I want.



By establishing detailed rock textures away from the water, the looser strokes for the water itself can help enhance the sense of movement.



ArtRage Studio Pro comes with a host of useful Sticker presets loaded. Try some out to find what marks suit your needs best. You can adjust their settings or even create your own from scratch.

Artist's secret

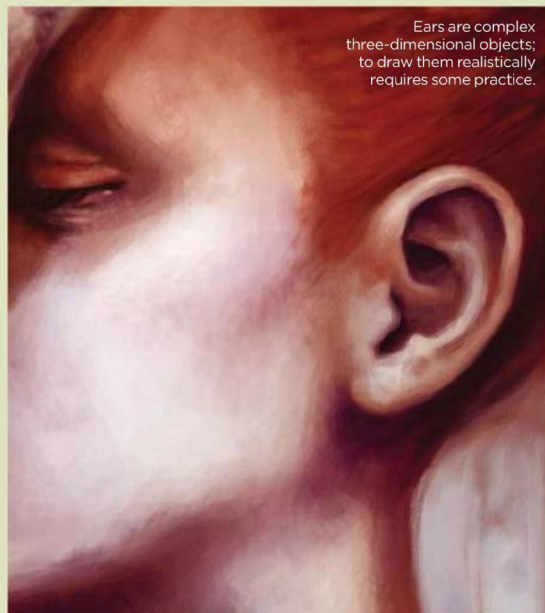
OVERLAPPING SHAPES

Never forget how useful drawing basics like this can be for reinforcing the sense of depth in an image. It not only helps explain spatial relationships, but can be used to create negative shapes to enhance the composition.

Question

What advice do you have for drawing ears?

Jasmine Hensing, US



Answer

Lauren replies

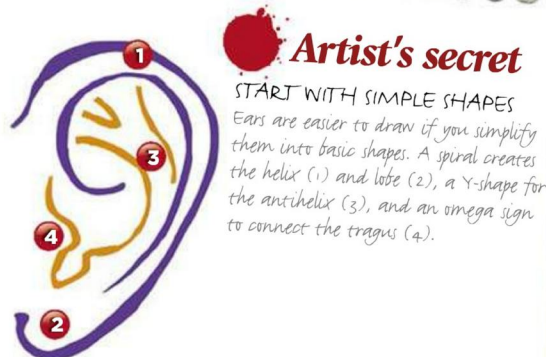


Ears are a complex structure of curves and folds, and there are a surprising amount of variations from person to person. These skin and cartilage folds overlap and disappear into one another, and ears also look different from every angle.

It's important to remember just how three-dimensional ears are, to be able to draw them well. The best way to get started is to learn the basic anatomy and how ears are attached to the head. Placement is also important for ears. They generally end up level with the brow and the bottom of the nose.

There are four main parts of the ear: the lobe, the tragus, the helix and the anti-helix. The helix is the outer rim of the ear that creates the C-curve ear shape. It connects to the lobe, which is the fleshy bit at the bottom that connects to the jaw. Then inside there's a Y-shaped fold: this is the anti-helix. Finally, the tragus is the hard nub connected right by your cheekbone. You can draw a basic ear just by outlining these four simple parts.

However, to shade an ear you have to study how the different parts join and stick out.



Artist's secret

Ears are easier to draw if you simplify them into basic shapes. A spiral creates the helix (1) and lobe (2), a Y-shape for the anti-helix (3), and an omega sign to connect the tragus (4).

Question

How do I paint the look of old scrolls into my paintings?

Daniel Rivers, Canada

Answer

Dave replies



The main points to get across with this sort of painting are texture and age. When I approach an image like this

I tend to produce and finish the actual painting or drawing first, adding a grainy surface and other details afterwards.

To create the coarse, weathered look of the paper, try overlaying a texture image on top of the art, using a flat pattern such as an aging stone wall or flaking paint surface or rust. Switch the new texture layer to Soft Light and switch the Opacity to 50 per cent

or lower, so that you don't detract too much from the actual painting. Don't collapse or flatten that layer just yet, because you might want to change the opacity later.

Old scrolls curl and deteriorate at the edges over time, so try rubbing away small sections of your painting. I tend to avoid adding the curling effect to the image: it can end up distracting the viewer from the painting's content. To the tattered edges you can also try adding a darker colour to give off the impression that the scroll has been damaged by fire or stained by water.

I've created a suitable image and placed a yellow colour filter over the top. Right now it's still too plain and new looking.



Here I add a gritty stone texture over the image, and rub out borders of the painting leaving a ragged, stained edge.

Question

What's the easiest way of structuring and blocking out feet?

Mark Joseph Kilkelly, Ireland

Answer

Bill replies



The best method is the simplest method when it comes to creating any part of the human body from imagination. All things can be broken down into a construction of smaller shapes, and feet are no exception to the rule. The sole of a foot is quite easy to visualise so start with that.

Make it a plinth on which you can sit a wedge for the top of the foot and a pole with a torus to create the lower leg and ankle. Once you have the construction in your head you should have no trouble changing the viewing angle and reconstructing at whim. While painting the



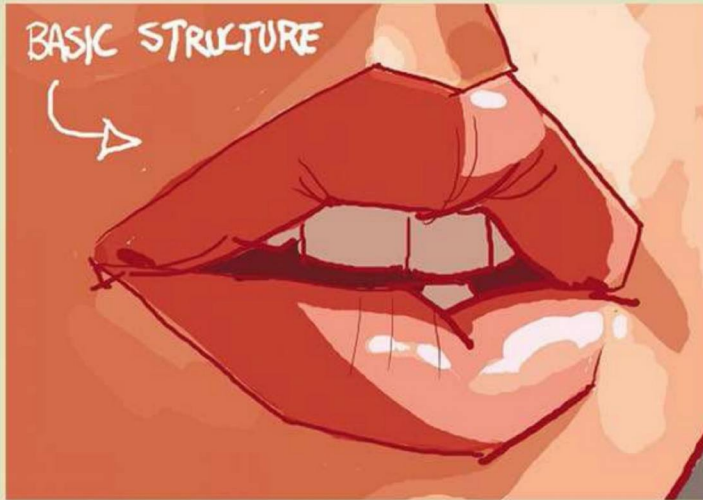
Whether they belong to a halfling or a giant, the painting of feet always starts with the gradual build-up of smaller, simple shapes.

foot, follow the rules of light and shadow. Keep in mind the smoothness of flesh and the texture of body hair during the final stages of the image.

Question

Is there an easy way to give my female character realistic, sexy lips?

Linda Bloom, US



Answer

Paco replies



When it comes to painting realistic parts of anatomy the process is usually the same. First, study lips from real life through the use of either reference photos or a live model, and try to understand their shape. This is important: you can't paint anything realistically without understanding it, so if you aren't confident about your ability to depict realistic lips then perhaps some life-painting sessions are in order.

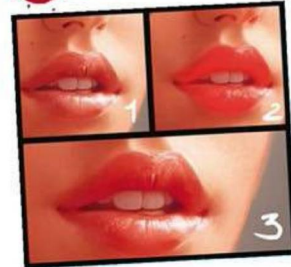
Other than that, just try to be subtle when painting the wrinkles of the lips. Use soft brushes, and don't forget where the light is coming from. If you use a

Photoshop scatter brush to create a noise texture in a low opacity Multiply and Soft Light mode layer, then you can achieve a more natural look for the skin.

About making them look sexy... well, normally, big and moist lips are sexy. Furthermore, a slightly open mouth is sexier than a closed or a wide-open one. But the true key of painting sexy lips (or any other sexy thing for that matter) is to reflect in your painting what you like about them. Think about how they make you feel, and try to paint in that mood. If you manage to put a dash of your own passion into your painting then you'll have won half the battle.

Lips can seem difficult to paint, but once you understand their basic structure, they're no big deal. Just try to be subtle with the detail.

Artist's secret



DYE THE LIPS RED
Warm colours are sexy. To make lips more desirable and intense I sometimes paint over the lips with red in a low opacity soft Light layer and then apply Gaussian Blur.

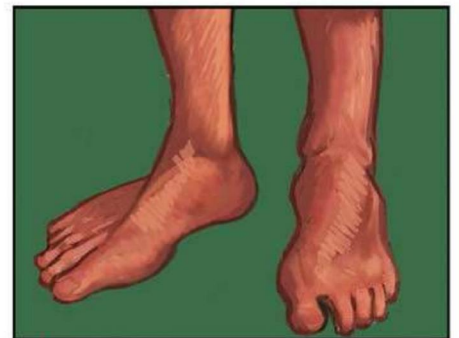
Step-by-step: Painting feet from your imagination



1 In PaintShop Pro I draw the basic block construction of the feet. I construct the feet from a triangular wedge sitting on a sole-shaped plinth at different angles. Using these basic building blocks I draw out the outline of the feet, and then use the shapes to block in the basic shade.



2 With the basic shapes down I start to flesh out the feet. I keep the strokes fat and the opacity quite high to keep the shape of the feet from breaking down into a solid lump. Fortunately it's easy to look at your own feet when it comes to picking out foot shape nuances to paint in.



3 Now that the feet are starting to look more solid I begin to add the lighter tones at the top of the feet and toes. I outline the toenails and lower the saturation to give the overall colour a fleshier feel. Some hairs and grass underfoot are all I need to complete the picture.

Question

I need to make a sexy female ninja look deadly. Any ideas?

Damian Gias, US

Answer

Paco replies



If you've chosen to paint a female character – in this instance a ninja – and you want to make her look both deadly and sexy at the same time, then I think it's important to maintain a balance between these two extreme characteristics.

Whenever you have to design a character, even if it's someone who you're going to paint just once, you have to come up with some background information that will, in turn, inform your art. What's their personality, their social status, their chosen career? If you want to paint a sexy ninja

then you have to consider that ninjas are merciless, cold-blooded assassins, so you should reflect that in your work. If you don't then your ninja may end up looking like a stripper wielding a katana.

A good way to maintain a balance between these contrasting qualities is to paint her as a fearsome ninja that happens to be hotter than Hell. Her expression, her attitude and her gear are those of a shinobi mercenary, because those are characteristics derived from her lifestyle. And she has a sexy body just because she was born like that.



Step-by-step: Compose a cold-blooded killer



1 I spend some time doodling my character until I find something I like: a defiant pose with a sexy but practical outfit. Then I start to define that doodle with the aim of producing a solid base for the painting. I use Photoshop's Hard Round Basic brush, focusing on clearly depicting the design of the ninja as well as the colour, light and proportions.



2 I start to add more detail, this time using a Medium Opacity Hard brush. At this stage it looks quite rough, yet detailed. I try to define all the areas of the image before polishing it. If you want to paint a sexy-looking character then you have to pay attention to detail. Every line, every surface can mark the difference between what's sexy and what isn't.



3 I switch to Paint Tool SAI and start to polish the image using different blender tools. It's not necessary to paint in a smooth and polished way to achieve a striking image, but it's perhaps the easiest way. Remember that a depiction of a sexy woman doesn't automatically become a sexy image. It's the quality of your painting that determines the impact it has on the viewer.



4 Switching back to Photoshop, I paint the tattoos in a Multiply layer to preserve the lights and shadows of the leg. I also end up painting some final touches in a Normal layer. A good trick to use when applying tattoos is to first paint them on a different layer over the skin, and then make the layer slightly transparent to achieve a more natural look.

Question

How do I create the effect of frayed clothing or material?

James Connor, England

Answer

Dave replies



First, look at the actual material in question in the painting, whether it's a rough texture like sackcloth, or soft and delicate such as silk, or even animal hide or pelt. Each type will tear, tatter and disintegrate in different ways. With rough cloth it tends to break up and unravel, while silk often comes apart a bit like gossamer. With animal hide the fur recedes at the rim, leaving a bald outline around the edges.

With frayed cloth it's usually the outside edges that go first: the interlocking threads start to break up and move apart, unravelling and leaving an uneven line. In areas where the cloth has snagged on something, the unravelling is more distressed. It often clumps into thick knots and long strands.

A good way to accentuate the frayed effect is to lighten the edges. This gives the impression that the cloth's dye has faded.



In this image the cloth is suitably old, but right now it's not very convincing. The edges are far too crisp and sharp.

In the revision I've tapered the edges of the cloak with thin, lighter strokes. I've also dirtied it up and added a few stray strands.



Question

Can you help me to paint animal footprints in wet mud?

Cameron Oates, Scotland

Answer

Manon replies



To produce the most realistic results, why not go out in your wellies and take some photos of your footprints. You'll get some great reference images to work from.

I've chosen to paint my creature footprints in squishy wet mud. Study different types of footprints to decide what your person or creature would leave behind in the mud. Use a low opacity brush with lots of texture on it and a couple of layers of texture in Overlay to give a rich colour to the mud.

Use layers to add the highlights and shadows separately, so that you can then alter the opacity on the layer, should you need to. For more realistic shadows try using Multiply with a brown or blue/grey colour, instead of using black. No shadows are completely black to the eye in daylight.



I've kept the style quite loose rather than detailed to depict the mud. Although this is a creature, he's not that heavy because his footprints don't sink in too deep.



Establish a light source and start from there. The raised mud around the print will have lots of wet highlights with shadows in behind.

Question

Is there an easy way to create complex, elegant patterns?

Bobby Patterson, US

Answer

Mélanie replies



For an example of this task I've chosen the most famous style of elegant patterning: Art Nouveau. The art movement was inspired by the curves of nature, vegetation and animals, and it's crucial to keep this in mind when designing this type of pattern.

Using simple lines I sketch the general shape of my pattern. I then construct the pattern, refining the curves: they need to be perfect and harmonious. I always use a Basic Round Edge because I need to have clean lines. Then I add a few more elements such as leaves, flowers and small details on the petals. Using a lot of colours gives the impression of complexity in the design.

To produce the final design – and to save time – I simply duplicate and flip the pattern horizontally, to match the opposite side.



This basic sketch is the foundation of the eventual design. I can easily see if the shape looks great or not and quickly modify it without having to repaint everything.



I interlace the curves and the vegetation, which brings more dynamism and a very Art Nouveau look to the pattern.

Question

What's the best way to paint realistic freckles and skin details?

Marianne Basso, US

Answer

Mélanie replies



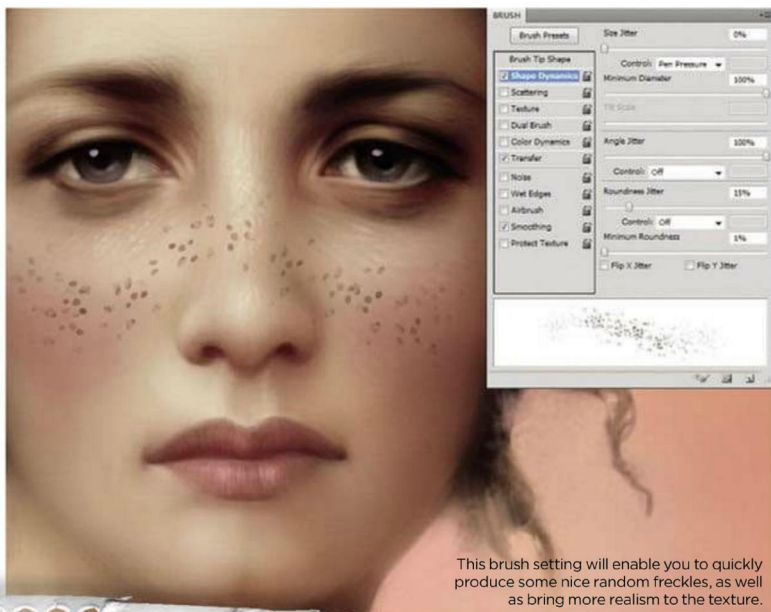
I paint small skin details using custom brushes. The best way to start is to add these details onto a well-painted base – when the skin is painted and finished. Their location is also important; this extra texture will attract the eye, so I always place it where I need the viewer to look.

I always use some dotted brushes, instead of painting freckles one by one. For the freckles I adjust the Angle Jitter of the Shape Dynamic setting to create some random dots here and there. Avoiding

an ordered look is key when painting freckles, so I erase some.

The approach for painting skin pores is much the same, except I don't use the Dynamic Shape setting. I paint some small dots in a light colour around the eyes and nose with the same brush. To increase the light and introduce colour variations I try different layer modes: either Screen or Color Dodge.

Once my skin detail is complete, I use the Blur tool (never the Filter), to blur and blend the skin details with the skin base.

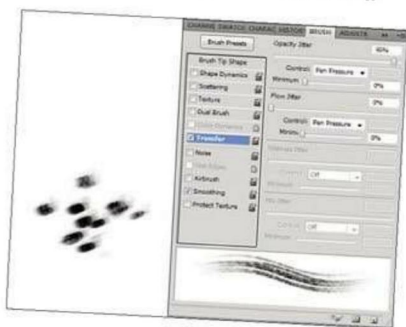


This brush setting will enable you to quickly produce some nice random freckles, as well as bring more realism to the texture.

Artist's secret

THE FRECKLES BRUSH

This is the kind of brush I use for freckles and skin pores. The resulting skin texture will be richer and look more realistic. It's important to have different custom brushes.

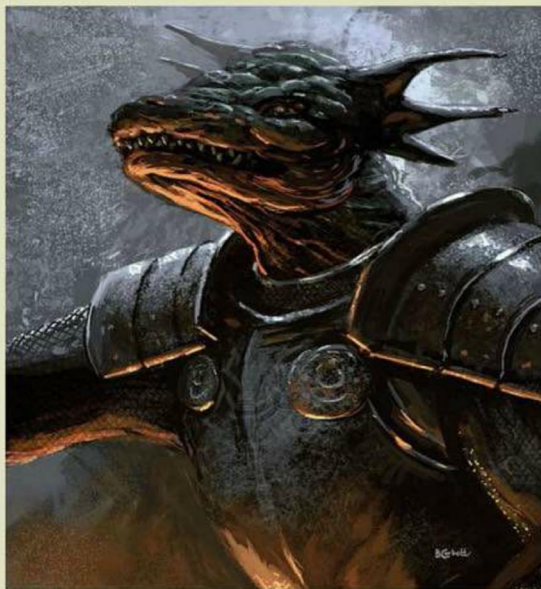


Integration is important. Pores and freckles must look natural, like they're part of the skin. As such, I always erase some parts, or change the opacity of the layer, to create a realistic look.

Question

Can I make a black and white painting look colourful?

Jackie Zhang, South Africa



The mixture of just two highlight colours – warm and cold – gives the impression that the image is far more colourful than it really is.

Answer

Bill replies



The simple answer is yes. And the simplest method is to overlay the black and white image with a Color layer, flood-fill the dominant colour and then paint in the other colours as required. After doing so, you'd lower the opacity of the main Color layer to ensure the colours aren't oversaturated.

Next, continue to add Color layers and Overlay layers to intensify the colours where required. The last step in this process would be to paint back into the merged layers, to bring out the highlights and detailed textures of the piece you're working on.

There's an even quicker way to bring out the vibrancy of a greyscale or mono-coloured piece. Simply create a single Color layer and flood-fill it with the chosen main colour. Create a new layer and paint the reflected light directly into the image using a strong colour source. You'll be surprised how colourful this can appear, even if you only use three to four colours to bring the painting to life. That's exactly what I've done here with my dragon warrior painted in Paintshop Pro.



This dragon warrior is in need of a colour makeover. However, it won't take much more painting to make him look noticeably more vibrant.

Question

How should I go about painting a weatherbeaten, mossy statue?

Lee Mills, England



Next month
ON SALE: **6 January**
How to paint a
stunning sunset

Answer

Lauren replies



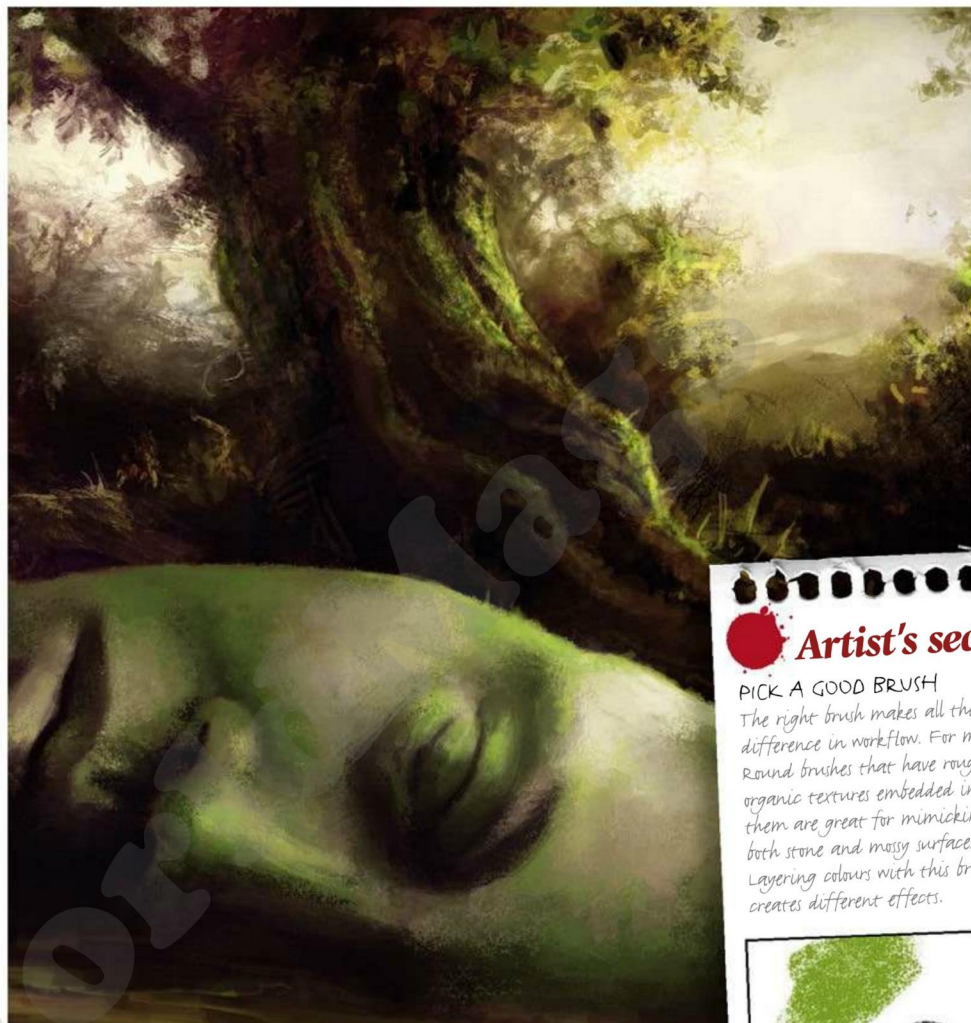
This is an example of how paying attention to form, colour and your brushes can be really important when it comes to producing great art.

It's a common mistake to isolate objects in a painting, for instance painting the statue first, then painting moss on top afterwards. The result usually looks strange, with the moss slapped on unrealistically. This problem can be avoided by remembering that the moss is essentially a part of the statue, and therefore it follows the object's form.

Instead of adding the green last, take steps at the beginning to include green tones in the statue before you even start to really work out the form. Laying down all of your colours as quickly as possible is a great way to avoid flatness. Worry about texture and details later.

It's also important to consider what kind of material your statue is made from, and the impact the environment has had. Marble ages very differently compared to a soft, porous stone such as sandstone. They'll have different textures and colourations. The weather can also affect stone: a desert or wet environment could contribute to a worn-down look, or perhaps the statue is crumbling and cracked. These are all things you should consider before you get too far ahead.

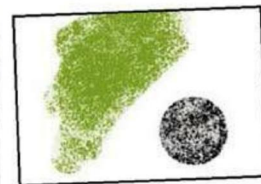
As you can see, ancient statues and overgrown signs of civilisation are a great way to add mood and a sense of culture to an image.



Artist's secret

PICK A GOOD BRUSH

The right brush makes all the difference in workflow. For moss, Round brushes that have rough, organic textures embedded in them are great for mimicking both stone and mossy surfaces. Layering colours with this brush creates different effects.



Step-by-step: Painting moss and stone

1 First, block in your basic values and shapes. Don't concern yourself with any details just yet. Just establish the general form. A basic Round brush will do. I use a variety of stone colours and mossy



greens; this creates a solid colour base to work from so the statue looks like it's being assimilated into the environment.

2 Refine the form of your statue. Concentrate on the lighting and values. Don't worry about the textures yet; instead, focus on the shape and colour. Even though my stone colour



overpowers the greens in this step, I keep the greens present to act as a solid base for the mossy textures I'll add next.

3 Using custom brushes with rough textures, I start adding detail to the statue's surface and the moss. Layer your greens and let them bleed into the surrounding stone colours for an



integrated look. Placing a lighter green on top of a dark green base creates the feel of depth to the moss with very few brushstrokes.

Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at help@imaginefx.com or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**



Alphonse Mucha

Not just a pioneer of an aesthetic style, Mucha became the poster boy for the first generation of modern artists

*M*ucha was a rock star of his age. Along with other Art Nouveau painters and designers, Mucha exploded onto the scene in the late 19th century with a style and manifesto that shook the establishment. To this day the artist is revered for his aesthetic, his gift for a beautiful line, but there was much more to Mucha than a pretty poster.



"He was a fabulous draughtsman who created powerful images," comments Paul Greenhalgh, an expert on Art Nouveau and director

of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich, England. "I would say also, his images have a sense of liberation and joy about them. They tend to be slightly naughty. Mucha's women tend to be very self-confident and very sensual."

At the time Mucha, and the other designers and artists of the Art Nouveau such as Gustav Klimt, Georges de Feure and Anton Gaudi, were rebellious and reactionary. Their approach caused outrage with an establishment that was losing influence. New technologies meant artists and designers could fund themselves, ➡

Artist PROFILE

Alphonse Mucha



Mucha was born in 1860 in Czechoslovakia. His commercial work in illustration and design became the driving force behind Art Nouveau. He later created the Slav Epic, a 20-piece canvas narrative history of the Slavic people. The artist died in 1939.
www.muchafoundation.org



TETES BYZANTINES: BLONDE

Conceived to be used as wall pictures, these decorative panels from 1897 were revolutionary. The exotic detailing, warm tones and flowing patterns that suggested form are typical Art Nouveau.

MUCHA'S DANCE

Marta Dahl reveals why Art Nouveau is so inspiring



"I would say the two most important aspects that made Mucha's style was line art and character depiction. His line art combined bolder, dynamic lines with subtle feathering and hatching. The flowing lines he portrayed his characters with were contrasting, yet balanced by the subtle geometric patterns.

"The way that he pictured women also makes Mucha unique among the other painters of the period. His women were radiating with a kind of healthy sexuality, but not in a sense that we would understand today. They weren't provocative in any way, nor were they portrayed as objects of desire. They simply possessed this unaware sensuality."

PATTERNS

Complex patterns and floral details are the hallmark of the Art Nouveau movement. Mucha was adept at playing with the viewer, by bending the stem of his sunflower into the border or developing the line from the inner circle into a line that forms the border.

SIGNATURE DETAILS

Mucha's mix of thick and thin lines to highlight and add texture can be seen in his rendering of hair – a technique he adopted into many of his 'panneaux'.



SILHOUETTE

Before pin-up became a recognised genre, Mucha was creating the same poses for commercial gain. The silhouette used in *Dance* can be seen again and again in paintings from Elvren to Adam Hughes. It's sexual, yet fun and innocent. Interestingly, the silhouette is defined by its line-art and not by values or shading.



COMPOSITION

Mucha's *Dance* adheres to the Golden Rectangle; his painting can be divided into three sections. Although the figure sits in the centre, key areas cross the optimum areas. Her nose and eyes sit in the top third, while each key area of the circular frame lines up with a Golden Line – the top centre, sides and bottom of the circle.

LINE WORK

Mucha employed a clean, simple set of rules to render his line work. Heavy, thick black lines are used to highlight the focal points of his images, while lighter lines are used to add detail. In keeping with the Art Nouveau style, Mucha uses large sweeping curved lines, said to evoke the lines found in nature.



➤ and publish and distribute their own work. They were shrewd entrepreneurs of the first truly modern artistic movement. "It was a tremendously democratic movement that happened outside of the academies," says Paul.

BREAKING GROUND

The old boundaries that defined what art is were torn down. For artists of the Art Nouveau there was a truth in all crafts. It was futuristic and traditional, functional and fantastic, it was a melting pot of

Seen in the context of the end of the 19th Century, Art Nouveau was an indication of reform, rebellion and freedom. "The beginning of the 20th century was even more technologically extreme than the age we're in now," says Paul, listing the era's inventions that include the skyscraper, car and aeroplane, the department store and magazine, and with them the poster. "Art Nouveau fed on all of those, and a young generation of designers – very much like the young techy artisan designers now – used the modern media to position their art."

“Art Nouveau was a tremendously democratic movement that happened outside of the academies”

contradictions where an advertising poster would be as well received as a new oil painting. The decadent climate of the past generation was replaced by a new age where art has no boundaries to creator or viewer.



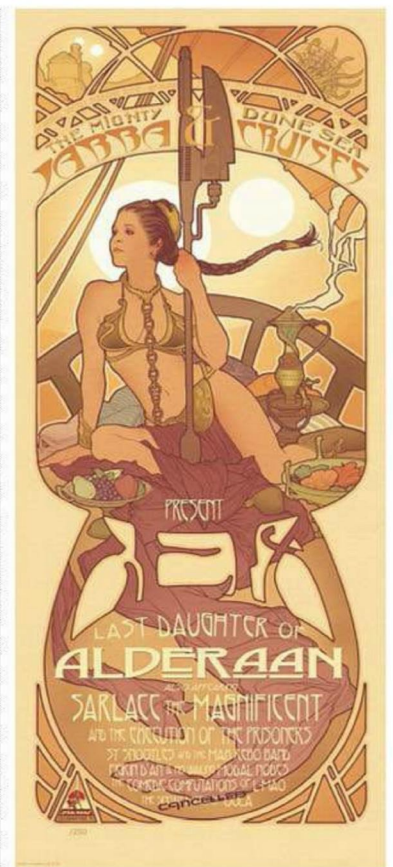
It's a view shared by contemporary commercial artists. Take Adam Hughes: "Commercial art and fine art aren't mutually exclusive.

Mucha showed that conflict between fine art and commercial art is nonsense. Anything done well is high art; it has nothing to do with medium, subject matter or application."

Set in this context, Mucha emerged as the world's finest poster artist. But it's a role he fell into. The traditionally trained artist from a small Czech village, who had a background in theatre scene painting, was new to Paris in 1887 and looking for magazine illustration work to fund his studies at the Académie Julian and the Académie Colarossi. Christmas 1894 and Mucha happened to be in a print shop when there was an urgent need for a poster to advertise Sarah Bernhardt's new play. The artist said he could create a lithograph in two weeks and on 1 January 1895 ➤

THE SEASONS: VARIANT 3

"Many art historians and academics tend to be bothered by it, because it's very racy. You tend to find art movements that are popular to be less well-thought-of among academics," explains Art Nouveau historian Paul Greenhalgh.



SLAVE LEIA

"When I'm not doing the odd homage to Mucha, I try to keep his sense of visual lyricism to my compositions and designs," says Adam Hughes. "If you want to emulate your heroes, you don't just draw like them – you emulate their pioneer spirit."

PRINCESS HYACINTH

Mucha layered his commercial work with meaning. This poster from 1911 features the circle, a symbol of Slavic unity that would reappear in 1912's oil painting *Praise the Lord in Your Native Tongue* from the artist's Slav Epic series.

➤ Mucha's *Gismonda* poster was released. There was an element of luck to Mucha's success, but as Adam stresses, "You don't remain the figurehead of an entire art movement if you don't have the mad skills to maintain it."

THE MUCHA STYLE

While not alone in pioneering exquisite line work – the US illustrator Windsor McKay was breaking-ground in comics at the same time – Mucha's depiction of form through intricate patterns, warm colours and exotic detailing came to be

synonymous with the expression of 'new art' of the age."

Yet there was more to Mucha than exquisite line art. Although nature influenced Mucha, and Art Nouveau, to create his identifiable long sweeping lines, it was a view of nature "that was different to what had been before and what would come after," clarifies Paul. Set against the revelations of Charles Darwin's Evolutionary Theory, nature had become a different beast. It promoted survival of the fittest: we no longer lived in nature's garden but were part of it, devolving into a natural

democracy. "There's a sense in which socially, politically, scientifically and sexually, nature suddenly took on a different role," says Paul.

Suddenly Mucha's elegant lines and natural references, his *Flower and Seasons* series, become political, sexual and liberal. By deliberately avoiding historical forms and using nature in this way, Mucha and the designers were at the front of the avant-garde. And Mucha's message was available to all, on posters advertising food and drink, on wallpaper patterns and in jewellery designs. In 1900 the 'Mucha style' went global as he bought space at the Universal Exposition in Paris. Expos were one of the phenomenon of the age – a modern means of exposure that cemented the Art Nouveau designers reputation as forward-thinking, liberal artists.

"It was aggressive and young. As such it became very popular, very in your face and made a lot of enemies," comments Paul. As Europe and North America became more nationalistic and conservative on the eve of



© The Bridgeman Art Library



war, Art Nouveau's liberalism was attacked. "It appeared in an explosion and it disappeared. In a way it was murdered by more conservative forces, it was crushed out of existence," reflects the art historian.

BEGINNING OF THE END

After World War I Art Nouveau gained a bad reputation. People took a dislike to it, which resulted in many artists associated with the movement denying it in later life. It's said that Mucha never liked the idea of being associated with anything so constraining as an art movement. He argued that art was "eternal" and could never be simply identified as "nouveau". Even at his peak Mucha found the commercial nature of Art Nouveau constraining and conflicting. "For any artist, definition can constrain – a constraint that Mucha found increasingly frustrating. He believed art operated on a more spiritual and personal level," says English artist Aly Fell. "He was someone who felt art should have deeper metaphor and allegory."

Mucha did eventually turn his back on Art Nouveau to paint his Slav Epic. Designed to celebrate Czech and broad Slavic cultural, moral and historical themes, this series of huge paintings dominated his work between 1912 and 1928. Less well-known than the striking style of his poster art, the Slav Epic has a lasting message. "I have to admit a special love for his Slav Epic," says Adam. "His

“Mucha was someone who felt art should have deeper metaphor and allegory”

commercial poster work has fabulous instant visual appeal, but the patriotism and love of personal heritage in his Slav Epic transcends aesthetic value."

The Slav Epic evolved out of his more popular Art Nouveau period and Mucha will always be an artist that embodied the spirit of that age. In art, accessibility provides longevity. "Aesthetic is universal,

HOLY MOUNT ATHOS

Mucha's Slav Epic was his patriotic magnum opus, a celebration of Slavic culture and history. Because of this work, and his nationalism, he was arrested by the Gestapo in 1939 when German troops marched into Czechoslovakia. The artist died soon after his interrogation.

WHY ART NOUVEAU LIVES ON

Artists love to play with the Mucha style, as Aly Fell explains



"His ability to incorporate design and composition, his use of embellishment and organic forms is hugely influential, and he was a superb designer alongside his technical skills as an artist," explains Aly Fell, who has paid homage to Mucha in a number of paintings, including Medusa (below). "Although my image is little more than a pastiche, just looking at Mucha and how he works adds to our understanding. The next stage is to move beyond that and use his inspiration to inform our own journey as artists."

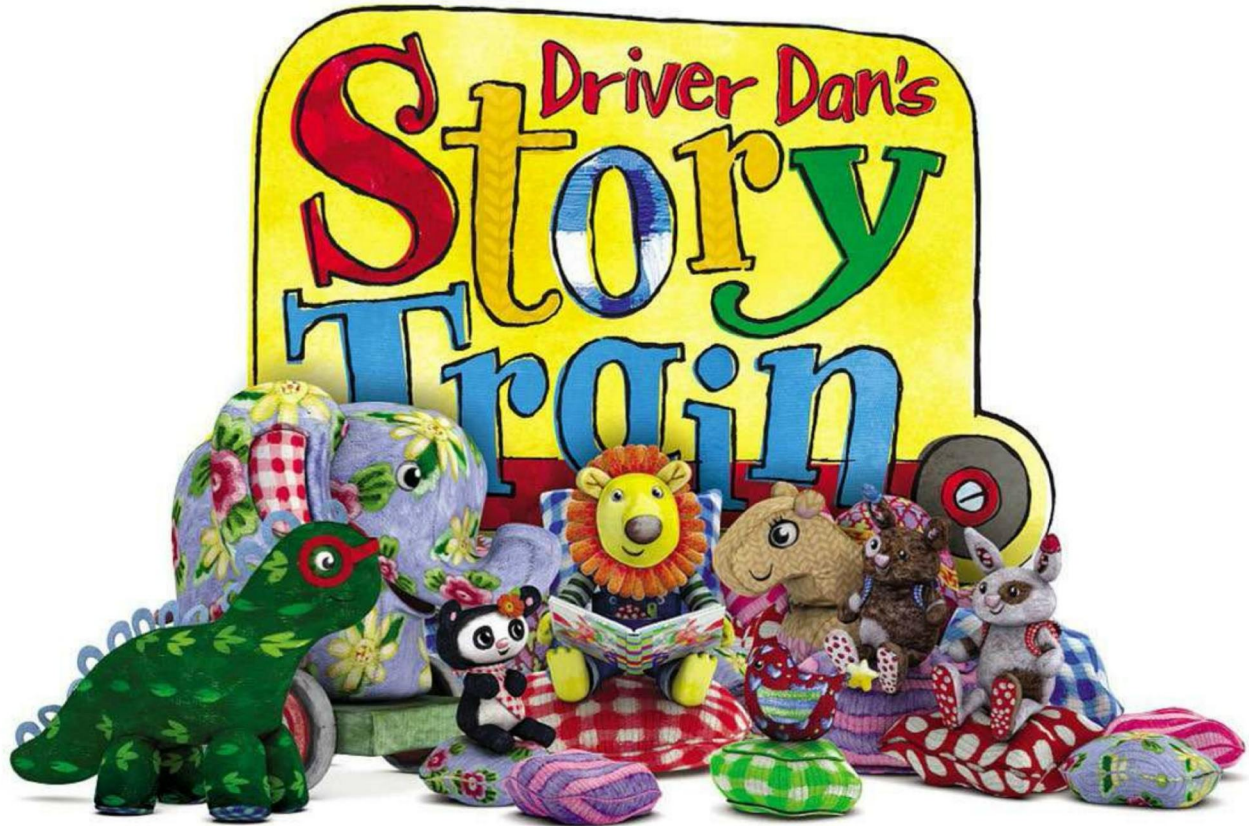


whereas 'message' is not," says Aly on why Mucha's poster art remains so influential.

Paul identifies a thread through the 20th century where Art Nouveau and the Mucha style continuously appears, from Pop Art of the 1960s to the French and British comics of the 1970s. While the message of Art Nouveau, its vibrant, dangerous and modern nature, has become clouded over time, the aesthetic appeal of Mucha hasn't diminished. In the age of the internet and digital art, the entrepreneurial drive of the Art Nouveau and Mucha is more relevant today than ever before. ●

The UK's Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts will have a new Art Nouveau exhibition running from 4 February 2011. The First Moderns will feature Alphonse Mucha and many more Art Nouveau artists and designers. Find out more about the exhibition at www.scva.org.uk.

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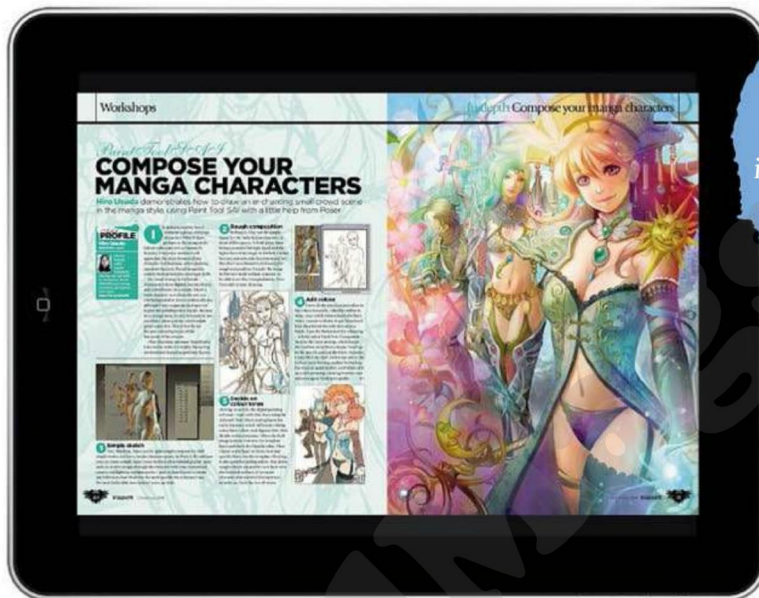
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Issue 72 August 2011



Pore over film concept artist Bobby Chiu's marvellous creature design cover workshop, discover how to turn a 2D design into a 3D character, how to add beauty to fantasy, then paint fur, scales, feathers and other detail with our fantasy creature special issue. Plus: the Massive Black studio laid bare!

Issue 73 September 2011



Create a radiant mermaid with Mélanie Delon, learn how to render real skin tones, age your art and paint like Frazetta. It's a fantasy special for our Q&A section, which covers everything from painting chain mail to fiery dragon breath. We also talk to famed concept artist and designer Roger Dean.

Issue 74 October 2011



Our Star Wars issue is full of imagery from a galaxy far, far away. We find out what it was like to work on the Prequel trilogy, and talk to the legendary Ralph McQuarrie. On the workshop front Iain McCaig reveals how to paint a Sith warrior, and Terry Whitlatch explains creature design on a galactic scale.

Issue 75 November 2011



Our game art issue kicks off with the stunning imagery for Guild Wars, while StarCraft, Uncharted 3 and Magic: The Gathering all feature in our packed workshop section. Elsewhere, you'll doubtless feel inspired by the art of Chesley award-winner Lucas Graciano. Plus: how to paint a space-opera princess.

Issue 76 December 2011



It's all go in our vehicle design special, as great artists including Syd Mead talk us through the Mechanics of Industrial Design. Then we explain how to paint a giant 3D fighting mech, a fleet of retro starships, and futuristic scenes using custom brushes in Photoshop. Oh, and 2011's Rising Stars results are in!

Issue 77 Christmas 2011



Artists from China, Japan and South Korea feature in this issue's knock-out workshop section, which covers traditional, 2D and 3D art. Chinese painter Wenjun Lin gives us an insight into the digital art scene in his homeland, while Jesper Ejsing opens up his portfolio to reveal fantasy creatures that are all too believable!

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Carlyn Lim

strong characters share the canvas with rich environments in this artist's fantasy art

Artist PROFILE

Carlyn Lim

COUNTRY: US



Contrasting physical elements, different subjects and various emotions inspire Carlyn to create art. That, fused with her love for animals, plants and all whimsical things transports her into another dimension where she can express her feelings and thoughts. She's currently working at Trion Worlds in California.
www.inkedradius.com/carlyn



THE POLARITY

"This artwork is about the different sides in a person. The two figures by the sides show the two extreme halves of one's personality, while the middle is the harmonious balance between the two. The different shapes and imagery surrounding the figures are arranged to emphasise the polarity between the halves."

THE PRIESTESS

"Aside from conducting sacred rituals in the temples of The Sound, the Priestesses of the Bird clan play their instruments to bring repose to the people. These beautiful beings are small in numbers, and are sought after by different clans."



OLEANDER

"Oleander are beautiful but formidable creatures. They are loyal pets and mounts of the Fire clan of my personal project, The Sound."



THE FISHBOAT

"This is one of the means of long-distance transportation in The Sound. They are controlled by the men-machines of the Land of Air, and are tough to gain access to."

THE PILL

"About life decisions that shape a person, of freedom and conflicting kinds of happiness. Sometimes, you find yourself trapped in the watchful eyes of all the people who care for you, becoming what they want you to be."

"Sometimes, you find yourself trapped in the watchful eyes of all the people who care for you..."

DEAFENING LIGHTS

"This was drawn in relation to the subject of the modernisation of society, of the city lights and sounds that never sleep. The young girl, wrapped in her own dreams of a fairy tale fantasy, represents how society is becoming more and more removed from reality."



CARLYN LIM

Sketchbook

SCENES FROM THE SOUND

"Various scenes from The Sound. From the top, as the player's character Crease journeys out from his little town, the elder peawillows give him advice. The second frame shows Crease in the hidden chamber of the Bookkeeper, and the third is Crease's first encounter with a fire clan."

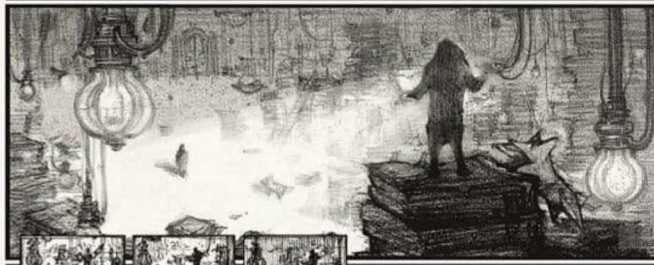


THE POLONG

"Polong is a folklore creature created with the blood of a murderer. The blood is put into a bottle and dark incantations are cited by black magic practitioners to bring forth its existence, and when crying is heard the Polong is born."

BUREAIRNE

"The creature of judgement, which travels in packs. They're easily heard through the clanking of the blades as they slither through the night skies."



"Polong is a folklore creature created with the blood of a murderer"



OLIVE

"The cycle of life and death, the real and the mystic. A boy mourns the death of a loved one, while the trees of mother nature comfort and protect him, whispering that he's not alone."

Want to share your sketches? Then drop us an email, with a selection of your artwork, to sketchbook@imaginefx.com, or upload your drawings at www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook.

RED RIDING HOOD A dark version of Red Riding Hood, created for 3DTotal. "I wanted to explore the dangers for kids wandering around alone in the dark," says Blaz.

Close

“I love creating scenes where people are small, insignificant and vulnerable”

BLAŽ PORENTA

With a dream commission for Marvel under his belt, the future looks bright for this talented Slovenian artist

Ljubljana-based illustrator and concept artist Blaž Porenta has drawn ever since he can remember. "As a child, it was characters from cartoons and movies," he says. "Later, when I started reading books, I moved to more fantasy themes – creating fictional worlds."

To this day, he relishes doing this on as epic a scale as possible. "I love creating scenes where people are small, insignificant and vulnerable," he says. "The next big challenge is to create a fantasy world that looks believable, as if it really exists somewhere. To achieve that, you need to follow basic art theory rules, and try to evoke emotions from the viewer. It needs to have an impact."

Blaž had never considered his childhood passion as anything more than a hobby until he discovered video games in high school, and began working up his own concepts for "improving" existing games. "It broadened my awareness of all the options that illustrators have," he reflects. "I realised what I wanted to do with my life."

Concept art for the games industry beckoned, and he went on to work as an art director at local developers Actalogic and ZootFly, not to mention ad illustrations for Volkswagen, daily newspaper Dvenik and juice brand Fructal, and album artwork for various

leading Slovenian artists, including several for rock band Siddharta.

However, his biggest commission to date has undoubtedly been for Marvel: a 2010 series called Superheroes on Trial. "It opened my eyes a lot," he says. "I couldn't imagine how many rules are applied to comic book covers before this. I have to thank them for the chance, and for all the comments along the way. I learned a lot."

So does Blaž feel it's important to grab opportunity when it arises? "Maybe at the beginning of your career, when trying to establish a name and build a portfolio," he says. "But be careful what projects you accept. Some clients happily abuse young, inexperienced artists to their advantage, with serious consequences."

GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME

He's turned down his share of chances in his time – "perhaps because of my lack of experience and low self-confidence," he says – but with no regrets. "The big difference between us and athletes is that we can get only better and better," is his appealing philosophy. "Great opportunities will come."

Experimentation is important to Blaž, and he enjoys being taken outside his comfort zone to push his style in new and unexpected ways. "When you limit yourself, you limit your chances for improvement and originality," he says. ➔

Artist PROFILE

Blaž Porenta

COUNTRY: Slovenia

FAVOURITE ARTISTS:

Jon Foster, Phil Hale,

Craig Mullins

SOFTWARE USED:

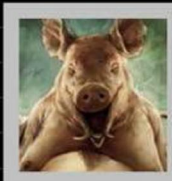
Photoshop, ArtRage

WEB: www.blazporenta.blogspot.com



THREE LITTLE PIGS Another children's story is given a darker twist for 3DTotal. "The pigs aren't so innocent anymore," says Blaž. [Close](#)

Gallery





SAGA Blaž's cover illustration for Siddharta's album *Saga*. "A person descends into himself as his journey ends, and is ready for a new beginning. Then the cycle starts again." [Close](#)



SKETCH AN IDEA "I start off with a rough black-and-white sketch, then place abstract shapes on the canvas until I find something that works." [Close](#)

CREATING DREAMSCAPE

Blaž walks us through his process on a recent surrealist scene

Dreamscape took around three weeks to complete. "Showing the scale of those whales' heads was quite a challenge," says Blaž. "I was trying everything from small textures to fading colours. It's hard doing something on the spot, if you don't have a plan."

Comments



Ian Dean
ImagineFX

"This is a truly epic glimpse of a fantasy dreamscape that manages to convey a sense of incredible scale, yet the use of light and colour ensures the scene remains light and breezy. The repetition in the shapes of the whales and mountains also gives the impression that they're living monuments."



Dan Scott
Pro artist

"This is a great fantasy piece in so many aspects. The foreground elements are expertly used to convey a sense of scale and I'm really enjoying Blaž's use of colour and his painterly brush strokes."



Jacob O'Sullivan
ImagineFX reader

"Blaž demonstrates a very good use of colours in this piece, and I like the detail that's been put into the character in the foreground. If I were to be hypercritical then I'd say that his image could do with some tidying here and there, so that it looks less smudged together. But that's just me!"



START STORYTELLING "First colour test: abstract shapes are replaced with more defined elements, and a story starts to emerge. I play with whale head designs, adding fins and separating its lower jaw."

IMPLY SCALE "Time to portray the enormous scale of these whale heads. I sculpted mountains below, added other life forms and a little vagabond boy to establish proportions and enrich the storytelling. The upper-right corner seemed a bit empty, so I added a flying ship."

PAINT CONNECTIONS "I connect the ship to the boy with a string, so it looks like a kite, and add a pet fish over his shoulder, so he's not alone in this strange dream world. These small touches add to the emotional value of the image."

BLAŽ PORENTA



BAROKO This was created for a rock ballad by Siddharta. "The song has some heavy guitar riffs, for which I used rough brush strokes." [Close](#)



DANGEROUS CITY "They're running knee-deep into the mud, insane grins over faces that are about to explode," says Blaž. [Close](#)

► "Experimenting separates artists from craftsmen. Where one becomes predictable, others excel and create something that wows in more than just a technical way."

One recent project that forced him into uncharted territory was the artwork for a jazz album by Kristijan Krajncan. "I listen to most things, but jazz isn't at the top of my list, especially if there are trumpets. I hate trumpets."

IMMERSED IN THE MUSIC

Blaž began by listening to the album on loop before starting work on the painting, to immerse himself in the feel of the music before translating it into the visuals. "This time it was just too hard to do that," he says, "so I was lucky enough to collaborate with the designer, who was also in charge of a story and main concept for the album."

The music in question was experimental in style, which informed his artwork in turn: "It was spontaneous in brush strokes, and sketchy in places, with plenty of improvisation to match the theme of the album," explains Blaž. "The designer knew what to expect from me, so he wasn't too bothered if I listened to the jazz."

Of course, however strong the relationship with the art director,

commissioned work involves a great deal more planning, sketching, colour studies and so on, when compared with self-initiated projects. Blaž consciously makes time for the latter, and has exhibited in galleries across Slovenia, as well as California and China.

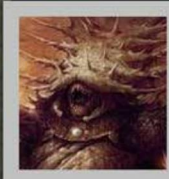
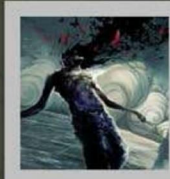
The artist's influences are wide-ranging – from abstract inspirations such as clouds in the sky, right through to books and movies – but he also swears by the simple pleasure of soaking up the skills of others. "Seeing great artworks pushes me to learn more," he says. "I'll often stare at a painting that I really like for hours, looking for clues on how it was made, which brushes were used, and figuring out why it impresses me so much."

Of course, the generosity and openness of the online artistic community means that you don't have to dig too hard to unravel the mysteries behind any given piece of work, and Blaž is openly grateful to those who choose to share custom brushes with peers. "It's very unselfish to help others create new masterpieces," he says. "Long ago, people needed to travel with ships to the other side of the world to exchange goods and knowledge. Being online gives you everything in seconds." ●



GOD OF CARNAGE "This a cruel god without his own skin, so he uses the skins of those who were sacrificed to him," explains Blaž. [Close](#)

Gallery



Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: SKINNER

Setting himself the task of creating a creature for an imagined video game, **Mac Smith** came up with the Skinner, a vicious tunnel-dwelling carnivore that shreds its prey before devouring it...

Artist PROFILE

Mac Smith

COUNTRY: US



An experienced illustrator and graphic designer, Mac has moved into video game concept art, with his work featuring in the recent *Mortal Kombat* reboot. The New Orleans-based artist can turn his hand to 2D and 3D artwork, and is working on a new project for Warner Bros.

www.thebraintoad.blogspot.com

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The pitch I want to design a reptilian creature with tentacles that extend from its mouth to grab its prey, shredding flesh with tiny teeth as they retract back into its mouth. I envision it as a subterranean species that could act as a low- or mid-level guardian for an underground temple.

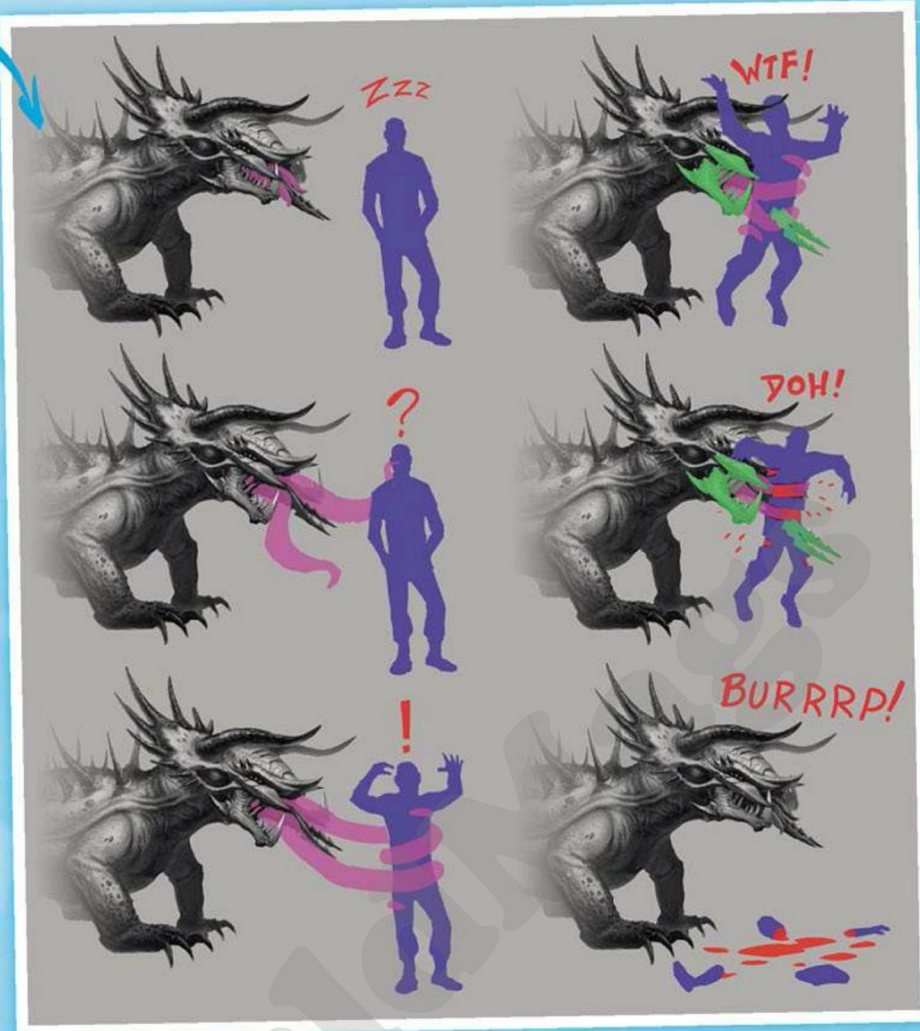
Start with thumbnails When designing creatures, I generally sketch out a page or two of very rough thumbnails. I seldom settle on one thumb, and usually end up combining elements from a few. I refer to a few reptile and insect photographs, but only as a general guide.

Create the rough I usually don't work this far in black and white if I'm making a colour concept (a few blobs to get my values will usually suffice), but I get carried away playing with the shapes on his head and decide to colour him later than usual. I also overlay a simple lizard skin texture.



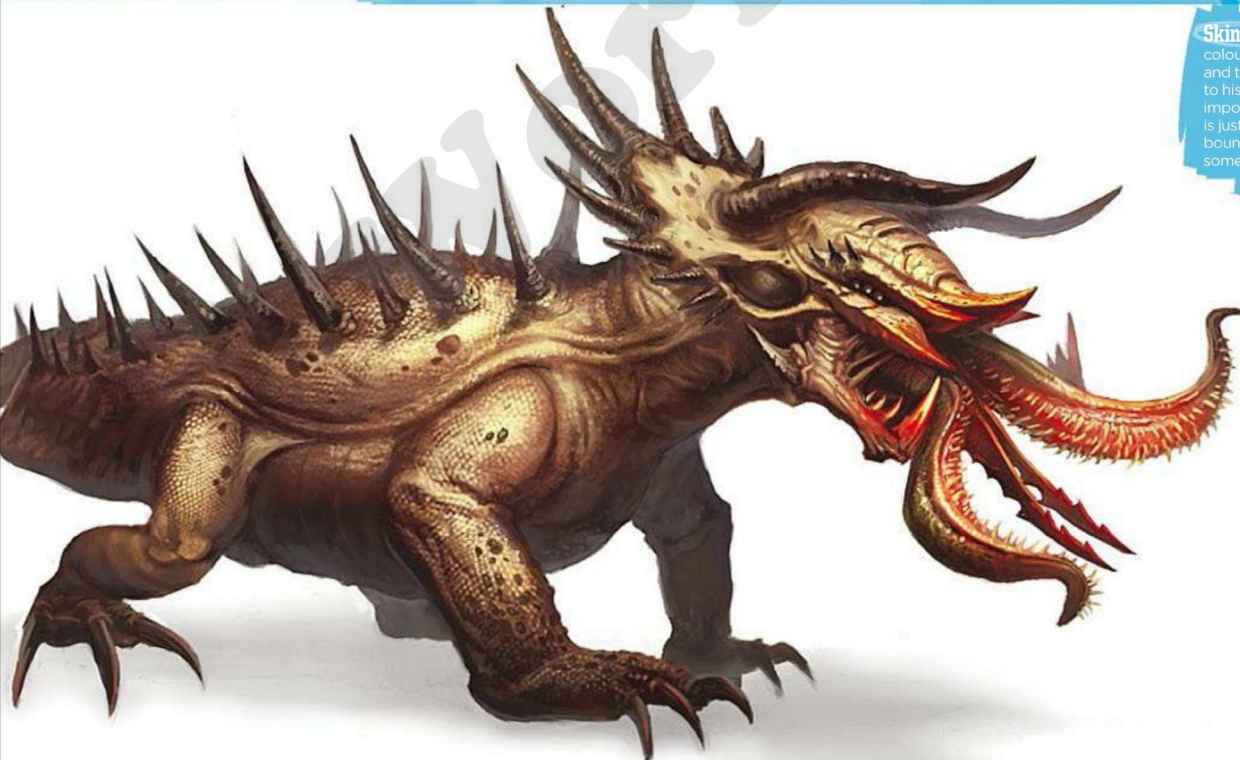
Animation breakout

Sometimes there'll be the need to illustrate how a creature moves or attacks. For the attack animation breakout, I erase the tentacles and draw them back in with a flat purple. I keep the shapes simple so it's (hopefully) easy to follow.



Skin colour

I decide on a dirty, earthen colour for this cave-dwelling creature, and then add some saturated red blood to his face to draw attention to the most important area. The rest of my process is just rendering and adding some bounced light underneath to pull out some of the forms.



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Mark Marcuson

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.markmarcuson.wordpress.com

EMAIL: markmarcuson@gmail.com

MEDIA: Oils



Having started out as a scientific illustrator and muralist for a natural history museum in the US, Mark is familiar with drawing insects and reconstructing paleo-mammals and plants. "It's given me an interesting background for creating sci-fi and fantasy creatures," says Mark. "Since then, I've worked freelance and become an oil painter full time."

Mark also loves the detail that's achievable with digital art. "It's easier to take risks digitally than with traditional mediums by using layers," he says, "even in the later stages of a piece. Through both digital and traditional, over the next year I'd like to get into cover art and matte painting."



1 JESTER

9.5x11in, oils

"This is an experimental illustration for a story about greedy villagers and dragons. But I've gotten sidetracked by another project and haven't had time to continue working on more illustrations for it, or even to refine the story."

2 FROG RIDERS

14x21in, oils

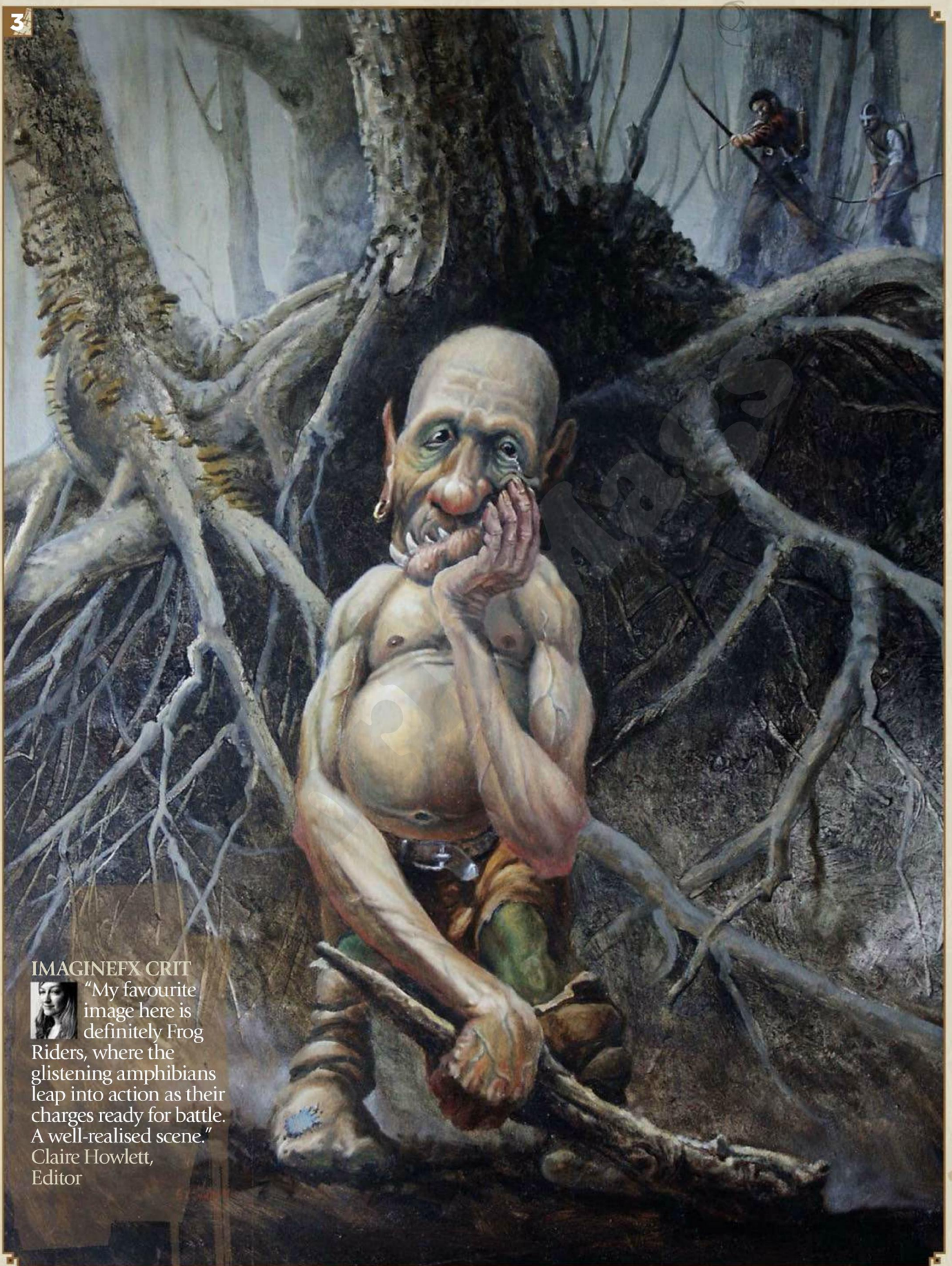
"I've always been fascinated by the lives of tiny things. Marshes, forests and tide pools are some of the richest biomes on the planet, with its own creatures and relationships. Why not throw some tiny humans into the mix and see what happens? Imagine riding a frog or a small lizard, or a water skimmer, and having to watch for predators that wouldn't mind including you for a snack."

3 OGRE

20x24in, oils

"My first thought while working on the original sketch was wondering what he could have eaten to cause such heartburn. My wife thinks it looks like me when I first get up in the morning."





IMAGINEFX CRIT



"My favourite image here is definitely Frog Riders, where the glistening amphibians leap into action as their charges ready for battle. A well-realised scene."
Claire Howlett,
Editor

Robert MacKenzie

LOCATION: US

WEB: www.robert-mackenzie.blogspot.com

EMAIL: rmackenzieart@gmail.com

MEDIA: Acrylic, watercolour, gouache



Robert graduated from San Jose State with a degree in illustration and animation. "Since 1998 I've worked at Lucasfilm, Dreamworks and Blue Sky Studios," he tells us, "creating concept art and visual development for films like Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, Shrek 2, Horton Hears a Who! and the Ice Age movies."

Outside his work in film, Robert tries to work primarily in traditional media. "I enjoy the process along with the struggles of working with paint on a tangible surface," he says, "and my traditional work and digital work are very important to each other. I find that I often think about traditional approaches when I work digitally and vice versa."





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IMAGINEFX CRIT



"There's a great deal of care and attention in these paintings, and although the monsters are wildly fantastical the settings are real, which makes the images all the more compelling."

Beren Neale,
Staff Writer

1 UNION SQUARE

17.5x20in, ink and gouache on paper
 "This was painted for a charity auction called the Totoro Forest Project. All of the work in the auction was directly influenced by Miyazaki's masterpiece *My Neighbor Totoro*. I have always been amazed by Miyazaki's masterful ability to tell original tales that exist in a timeless yet modern world. This was a great chance to refer to his work, while incorporating my own visual filter."

2 NOODLES AND ROMANCE

9.8x12.8in, acrylic on paper
 "I started designing these characters in my paintings as proxies for real people. Their designs are influenced by architectural and design motifs. I enjoy creating images with ambiguity. In one sense, the characters I paint are creepy, but I try to give them vulnerability and a sense of humanity."

Image by Chris Ng

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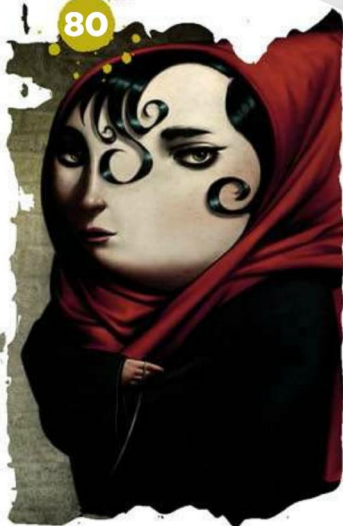
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PAINT MUCHA WITH A MODERN TWIST

Discover how to adapt Mucha's celebrated Art Nouveau painting techniques for your own fantasy compositions. **Marta Dahlig** reveals all

Mucha's Art Nouveau painting style is among the most distinct in history and it doesn't require great art knowledge or extended interest in the field to be able to identify and appreciate it. Mucha's work is a celebration of life and beauty. It's graceful, subtle, yet joyful and filled with vital energy.

I'd say that painting an image which adopts the style of this master artist would be a difficult task for any artist. It's tough to reproduce the general atmosphere of Mucha's artwork – the

grace and vitality of his heroines is unmistakable, making them an essential element. From a technique and composition viewpoint, however, his distinct style actually helps thanks to its great consistency.

There are other certain signature details that simply have to be included in your artwork. These include subtle character posing, circular framing, as well as bold, flowing body outlines that are contrasted with extremely detailed geometric ornaments in the backgrounds. Given that my personal technique is quite

different to that of Mucha's, preparing this image is a huge challenge for me on a technical level.

The two Photoshop brushes that I use for the painting are my standard Ragged Hard Round for shading and a default Hard Round with Size Jitter responding to Pen Pressure for inking. I always work on a maximum of five layers in my usual type of painting, yet I manage to use more than 100 in this particular image. I hope you find the workshop pleasurable to read, and have fun following the progress of my modern-day Mucha.

Artist PROFILE

Marta Dahlig
COUNTRY: Poland



Marta's a self-taught artist who's worked for several

publishing houses and mobile phone companies.
www.marta-dahlig.com

1 Presenting a modern view on Mucha

The beginning is the trickiest part. Because the image is going to be this issue's cover, I start my work backwards, to simulate the final look of the cover for the editor's approval. I follow my regular method of putting in colour first and then sketch some very quick lines on top. The initial idea is to combine Mucha's art style with a few modern twists. I decide to include a pattern of skulls and roses as a nod towards classic rock music, as well as a Wacom pen in the girl's hand.



2 The second sketch

After receiving feedback from the team I remove the Wacom pen and replace it with a necklace. The jewellery, like the tattoo and background pattern, will also contain roses and skulls. Because the image will be on the cover of the magazine and will have text laid on top of it, I alter the frame's colours so that it's less intense. The circular frame will become an elaborate mosaic to further correspond with Mucha's geometric graphic devices. I also change the layout of the frame to make room for the ImagineFX logo.

Shortcuts
Create a clipping mask
Ctrl+Alt+G (PC)
Cmd+Alt+G (Mac)
Quickly creates and releases a clipping mask.

3 Let the tracing begin

When the sketch is approved, I move onto the real work – preparing the line art. That's the most important part of the whole process, because outlines are where most of the distinctiveness of Mucha's work lies. To stay true to the original sketch, I keep it on a transparent layer underneath my first inking layer. I loosely trace the facial features I designed in the sketch. For the whole inking process, it's important to be mindful of the weight of strokes. The contour lines of the character should be bolder than the detailing lines within the body. Moreover, each stroke should have a slight variation in thickness. It's crucial to avoid painting all lines with the same width, which is dead weight in art terms.



In deep, dark, lush with a modern twist



PRO SECRETS

Clipping masks

These come in useful when you need a couple of layers to shade, yet have to stay within set borders. To create a clipping mask, make sure that the layer with colouring you want to fill the shape with is on top of the layer containing that shape. Then right-click the layer containing the colouring and choose Create Clipping Mask.

4 Inking woes

Aside from the thickness, it's also important to watch the shapes of the lines. Since colour in Mucha's work is limited, inking should be as detailed as possible. So, when painting an arm, I could draw one smooth line from the arm to the elbow. Instead, I keep my lines curved or at times even wobbly. This helps me symbolise the volume of flesh, as well as underline a natural, hand-painted feel.



5 Keep it clean

When doing highly detailed parts, it's crucial to keep the line art as clean as possible. Inking has to be precise, too. Each line should have a defined beginning and an end. There should be no overlapping of lines, no loose edges. Every line should have its purpose and a clearly defined place.



6 Detail management

Detail in Mucha's work is handled very specifically. Most of it is placed on backgrounds or character ornaments (such as jewellery), being much less obvious within the character's body itself. When you look at Mucha's work, you notice he doesn't paint eyelashes or fingernails. So I, too, omit these elements.



7 Cloth feathering

Painting cloth is the hardest technical part for me. It has to be subtle enough to work with the colour underneath it, yet visible enough to replace most of the shading. In general, when shading with inking, one can express the volume by intensifying the amount of lines or by enlarging their thickness. Mucha used both of these techniques; I rely on the first one.



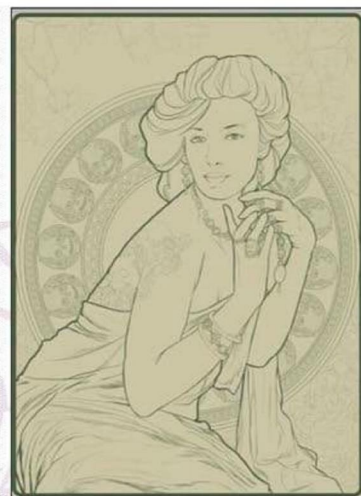
8 Designing the background

Mucha relies on an amount of loosely coloured elements rather than a small number of elaborately coloured objects. So I sketch many elements in the background – the leaves at the top and roses at the bottom. I also design detailed jewellery that will contrast with and enrich the plainly coloured character.



9 Circular skull mosaic

The skulls prove the toughest element to design. I plan the background circular frame to look like a mosaic. With the modern twist to the image, I want the skulls to be visible, but not to seem too blatant. I decide to place leaves and flowers in strategic areas on a white mosaic. From a distance these objects will look like a skull.



10 Finished line art

After I finish defining the rest of the lines, I clean up all crossing or irregular ones and send it to the ImagineFX team for approval. The ornaments of the frame are duplicated to give a good idea of what the final work is going to look like. For the final version, however, I'll copy them around within the frame once they're coloured.



11 Introducing colour

The next step is to prepare a good basis for colouring. I change the background colour to something intense so I can see any areas I haven't fully filled with colour. I then create a new layer and start on the character's body. I paint colours for particular elements on separate layers: the body colour, hair colour, bottom of the frame, top of the frame, tattoo, jewellery and so on.



12 Shading made easy

Thanks to my separate colour layers I have an easier time shading: I simply block the layer's transparency and shade the area within each object. In cases such as the body, when I need to use multiple layers for shading, I use clipping masks.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

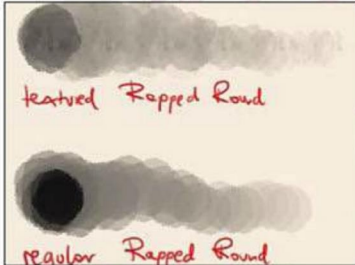
STANDARD BRUSH: SENSITIVE HARD ROUND

This is a default Hard Round with Size Jitter reacting to Pen Pressure. I used this brush for inking the background. It's a simple brush, yet perfectly able to do the job at hand.

In depth Paint Mucha with a modern twist

13 Useful brushes

I use only two brushes. The first is my Ragged Hard Round brush. The second is the variation of the first one, but with the default Photoshop bubble texture (41 per cent scale, 26 per cent depth). This adds a slight watercolour effect to the stroke and creates a paper grain texture. For areas where the texture is too rough, I smooth the strokes with a Median filter.



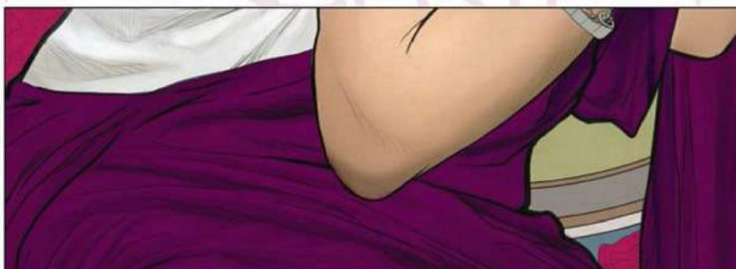
14 Mucha's shading

When Mucha's shaded the body it was usually limited to a very subtle gradient. This would be a bit too plain for the cover of ImagineFX, so I decide to go a bit further and add very subtle, yet still visible, shading to all the areas of the body. The shading is most thorough in the facial area, with visible shading of the cheeks and chin area. Following Mucha, I fill the lips with red but not up to the outline, which retains a natural feel to the lips and avoids a pasted-on look.



15 Shading the character's dress

To finish painting the clothing I add some very plain shading in the areas that I feathered a few steps back. I don't use highlights at all. The colours I choose for shading are a darker variation of the mid-tone, and I don't change hues for shadows as I normally would. The point of this step is to add a bit of realism to the cloth, yet still let it retain a flat feel – staying true to the Mucha approach.



16 Colouring the background

I paint the background with a limited range of colours. To shade the leaves at the top, I block the opacity of the initial colour layer, take a huge Ragged Round brush and run over the leaves with different colours when zoomed out. It's just enough to add some colour variation to the top of the image. The leaves should not be coloured precisely and the colour can look spilled over, rather than precisely applied onto different shapes. To paint the roses at the bottom I have to zoom in and add the shades much more precisely to achieve some depth.

17 Tattoo colouring

The plain colouring of the tattoo makes for a rather unconvincing solution, because the whole thing looks unnatural and like it's pasted on. To integrate it with the skin, I copy the layer with the colouring. Afterwards, I change the first tattoo layer's mode to Overlay and set its Opacity to 80 per cent. The second tattoo layer on top of that one I leave on Normal mode, but lower its Opacity to 45 per cent. This way the tattoo is lightened at the top of the shoulder and blends much better with the character.



PRO SECRETS

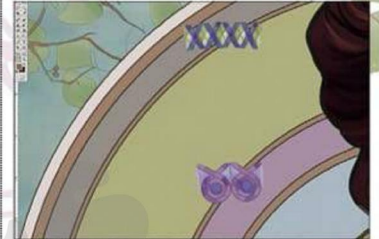
Textured brushes

Adding a texture directly to the brush is a good alternative to creating textures that are put on top of the painting. For example, when simulating a paper texture, I used to put a texture on a layer mode over a previously painted area. Nowadays, I try to add the texture directly into the brush, so the final effect is more integrated and thus convincing.



18 Preparing the pattern

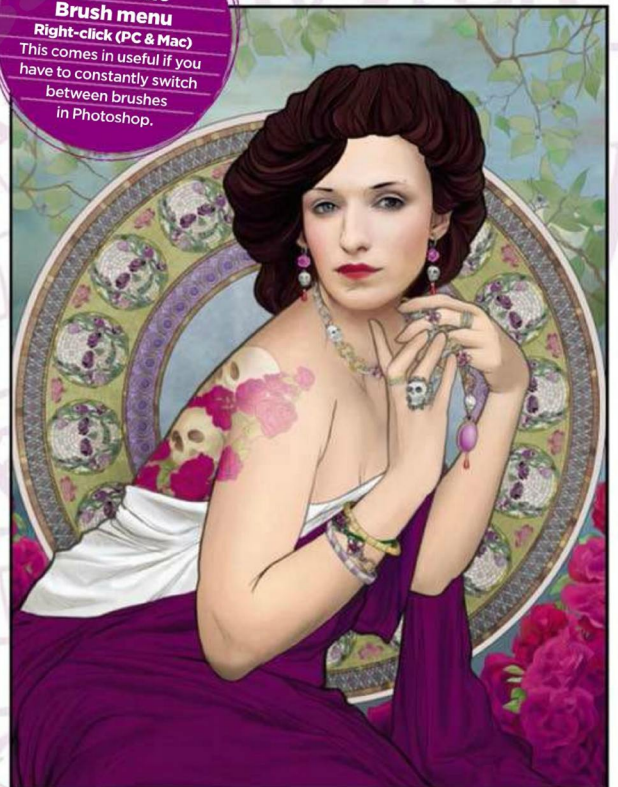
Since I don't treat the colours as final, I colour the ornament line art on several layers. This will let me change the hues easily if I decide they need some balancing. I separately shade each block of colour between the outlines, so the final look is more intricate and varied. After shading, I copy-paste and rotate the patterns around the frame.



19 The skull mosaic

I colour the skull mosaic, adding colour variations. On top of a rather desaturated foundation I add blobs of intense pinks, greens and light blues. It helps me to break up the uniform look. The intense colours of the two central rose heads act as eye sockets, which help to distract the viewer from the otherwise obvious skull. Afterwards I copy and past the skull mosaic around the frame.

Shortcuts
Access the
Brush menu
Right-click (PC & Mac)
This comes in useful if you
have to constantly switch
between brushes
in Photoshop.



20 Final additions to the image

My finishing touches include dividing the brown outline of the frame into small mosaic bits and shading them, and adding a small shadow to the bottom parts of the circular frame mosaic. Now I can finally consider myself done. What a journey! 🌸

Composition tricks

I'm keen for the three characters to stand out within the scene, so while I'm figuring out my composition I make sure to frame each one using the hills, spears and waterfall. This will encourage the viewer to stop and study each figure.



Photoshop

COMPOSE A GROUP OF WARRIORS

Artist PROFILE

Richard Anderson

COUNTRY: England



Richard was raised in Montana, US, and in 2000 attended art school in Seattle. He started working for ArenaNet in 2003 and after eight years moved to London to work at Moving Picture Company as a film concept artist. www.flaptrapsart.com

Richard Anderson illustrates a short story that tells of two tribal cultures teaming up in Ireland

I was commissioned by TOR Publishing to create an illustration for an online short story called The Iron Shirts. I was pretty excited when Irene Gallo, the art director at TOR, gave me the chance to work on this one.

It's a fiction piece that features some strong historical elements. The story's set around 1200 AD, and focuses on a group of Native Americans who travel back with the Vikings and subsequently become a

part of a mercenary group operating in Ireland.

After reading the story and getting ideas from specific scenes in the book, I knew that I wanted a soft green look with some mysterious individuals who would stand out from the rest of the crowd. Because the title is The Iron Shirts, I was keen for the scene to feature some extravagant-looking armour, or at least have some in silhouette. Everything just flowed from there.

Brush strokes

I want to use decisive strokes to describe the material, texture and lighting for the characters. Because it's a foggy scene, I decide that a sharp paint stroke would indicate that their clothing has a hard reflective surface. It also helps the viewer to grasp the direction of the light.



Lasso tool

I introduce a traditional look by using the Lasso tool and quickly hatching, just like I'd do with a pen or pencil in my sketch book. By applying one colour and using a small brush and hatching, the lines break up the soft green areas that are behind them.

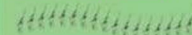
Using patterns

Applying a pattern to something is a great way to add interest to an object or character. The checkered pattern helps to describe the shape that the cloth is making. I add to the mood of the scene by having the material blowing in the wind.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: GRASSPAINT BRUSH



Good for producing a nice scatter effect and a texturised look while using the Smudge tool.

LARGE TEXTURE BRUSH



This brush has a good resolution if you go lightly and use different shades. It can introduce a great atmospheric feel to a painting.

How I create...

A MISTY SCENE



1 Feeling green

I start the image with a strong green palette in mind. Yes, it's a bit of a cliché, but it is Ireland after all. So I find a couple of older sketches of mine that are either in the range of green or contain a texture that I like the look of, and start compositing them together. From here I'm able to sketch out my general composition.



2 Make key elements pop

I'm going for a morning look so I drop the saturation; however, I apply strong saturation to certain elements to make them pop. I then paint in areas of more detail, such as the foreground character's helmet, and small touches like the mid-ground character's sword hilt. If I keep the characters mysterious, as they are in the story, then it'll enable the viewer to come up with their own interpretation of the scene.



3 Fill the planes

I start questioning how to bring the image to life, and play with some different shapes and scenery elements to distinguish the different planes in the image. I start drawing shapes on a new layer using the Lasso tool and stamp from the flattened image below. This introduces an instant texture and pattern, in this instance the flags. I also use the same technique with the grass in the foreground.



Photoshop

USE NATURE AS YOUR REFERENCE

After we invited Mother Nature to be his muse, **Svetlin Velinov** shares his process for painting a fantastical scene that has its roots in reality

When the editor of ImagineFX asked me if I'd be willing to produce a workshop for the magazine, I was a little hesitant at the prospect because I didn't know what the theme would be. However, once I found out that it would have something to do with the natural

world I accepted the offer immediately, because such a vast topic is a challenge and it was something that I needed in my life at the time.

"Nature as inspiration"... well, this could mean a lot of things to a lot of people. As well as having the freedom to paint just about anything, the fact that there are almost an infinite number of options available also had the potential to confuse and slow me down. To help me focus on a subject I selected suitable references using my photo collection and other resources that I found online.

By putting together this workshop, I hope to help you understand how to spot and interpret various forms and materials that you normally wouldn't notice, even though this rich source of inspiration is all around you. You'll learn to open your eyes and create your own world on the digital canvas.

Artist PROFILE

Svetlin Velinov

COUNTRY: Bulgaria



Svetlin's first drawing was of an apple, complete with a stem and leaves, which he painted in blue on the wall when he was only 11 months old. Now he's working as a freelance concept artist and illustrator, with his main body of work featuring in Magic: The Gathering.

www.velinov.com

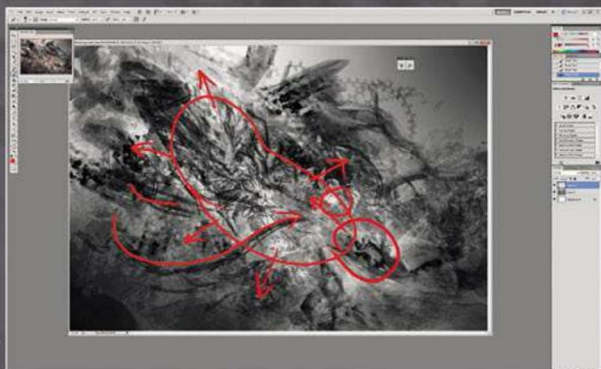
1 Get sketching

Whether the idea is already fully formed in your mind or is still a little loose, the first step is to warm up by producing a few quick sketches. It doesn't matter if they're unrelated to the topic. Sometimes all that's necessary is just for you to draw something while you mull over the basic idea. It's important to begin somewhere and, if you're lucky, you'll come up with exactly what you needed.

PRO SECRETS

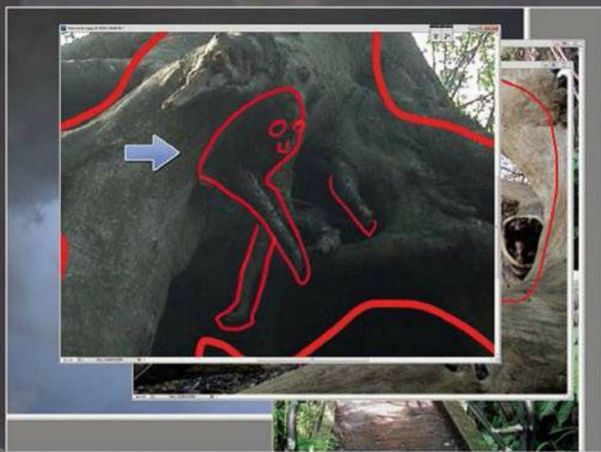
Rock-solid advice

When painting rocks with a custom brush, apply a drop shadow to the layer. This produces the effect of shade and enhance the grooves on the surface of the rock.



2 Solidify your idea

My concept imagines nature as a sleeping god, hidden in the bowels of the Earth. His sleep is disturbed by a magician who makes a plea for help using an ancient relic. Besides producing a pleasing illustration, it's important for me to have a clear story. However, it must be presented in such a way that a part of it remains open to interpretation by the viewer. Thus they become a co-author of the work. I use a brush that helps me create multiple forms in one sitting, striking a balance between black and white. I believe that pure design is composed of arbitrary volumes that slowly form a concrete shape, from where the idea will appear.



3 Open your eyes

Imagination can see any weird shapes in everything that surrounds us. I get the idea to look at some interesting shapes from my chosen references, then take them out of context and liken them to something else. So the roots of a tree become forest spirits, and the rock is a starting point for the shape and face of the deity. Other references suggest the form of various elements in the scene, such as the refuge of the god, and the structure of the rocks and the roots around it.

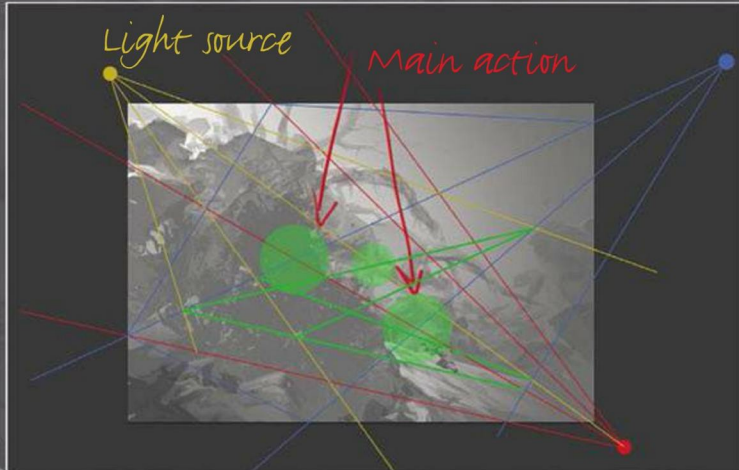
Shortcuts

Auto color

Shift+Ctrl+B (PC)

Shift+Cmd+B (Mac)

This comes in very handy when deciding on the colour of the image.



4 Structure the composition

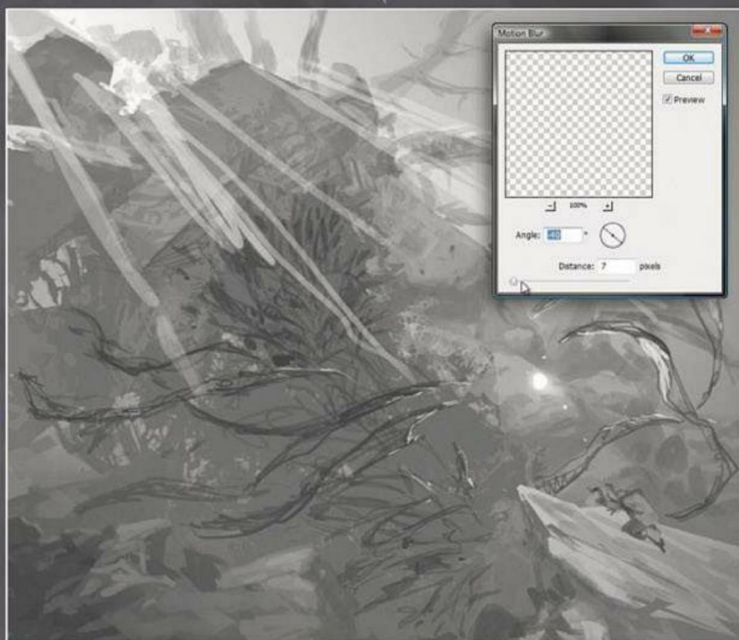
When working on an image, I always weigh up how the main elements interact in it and how they correspond to the secondary elements, which mustn't steal the limelight from the focal point. Here, I've marked the main lines of the plains, slopes and intersections, which help me to compose the different elements. In this case it's not about perspective, but rather structuring and placing individual elements in a way that highlights the central drama.

5 Light and atmosphere

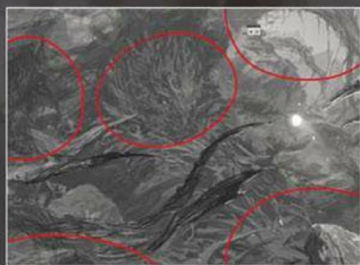
Setting the light source early on in the painting process will give you a clear idea on which direction to work in the construction of volume and the value of items in space. Light adds drama to the main action and, as you'd expect, places the focus on the important elements. In this composition there are two light sources. There's a natural diffuse light that's coming from the setting sun, and a scattered light from the artefact. Diffuse light comes on as backlight and the scene should be relatively dim, but this is offset by the second light source as well as the reflected light from the environment.

6 Light strokes

With a few random brush strokes I outline the rays that pass among the trees and stones. I use Motion Blur to create the necessary effect, then overlay a layer mask and apply brushing or the Gradient tool to remove what I don't need, so as to form the shape of the light. Gaussian Blur helps create the light that's emitted from the artefact and I leave a trail of light to give a sense of movement to the light globe, which is the centre of the composition. Even at this early stage I mark the effects of the light on the surrounding elements. These steps are important to complement the overall vision and give me an idea of how much work there's to come.



In depth Use nature as your reference



7 Inspired by nature

Now it's time to incorporate ideas from my references. This can be done either by using the references in the image, or to draw them from memory. Both methods are appropriate in this case, because they only serve as the starting point and basic idea for the development of the illustration. I prefer the second method, because it'll train your visual memory and develop your imagination. While the idea is in your head, you can enrich it unconsciously. Don't try to find the correct form in one go. Random scratches, rubbing out some areas, adding touches to other and working with custom brushes all help to refine your idea.



8 A good sketch is invaluable

I'm happy when I've got a workable drawing and a solid composition on the canvas. Whether the sketch is either designed in black and white or in colour has absolutely no significance. Having a concept that's developed to a level at which the main elements are present is invaluable. At this stage, I'll have defined the light sources, the contrast and edges of the objects, and have built the different volumes and values of shades. Any significant compositional problems will have been solved, and interactions between the major and the minor elements will have been clarified. This gives me a sound basis to proceed with the actual illustration.



9 Choice of colour

Before starting the painting process proper, I put together a colour palette to work from. My method for creating one is to select any photograph or image whose colour components are close to my original vision. I select File > Save for Web, and export the image as a Gif. Next, I choose Save Color Table from the drop-down menu and save it, before loading it into my Swatch panel.



10 Colour development

This will be the foundation on which I'll build and enrich the image's colour range. In this case, the keywords are 'vitality' and 'new life', so my choice of palette must correspond with these basic ideas. At this stage I work with two types of blending modes: Color and Overlay. First I create a new Color layer and select colours to paint in the image, taking into account the fore- and background areas, which must contrast with the focal point. At this stage, the colours are washed out, so I then introduce an Overlay layer and continue to set colours and enrich the spectrum where I see fit. The end of this stage is the beginning of real work on the development of the picture.

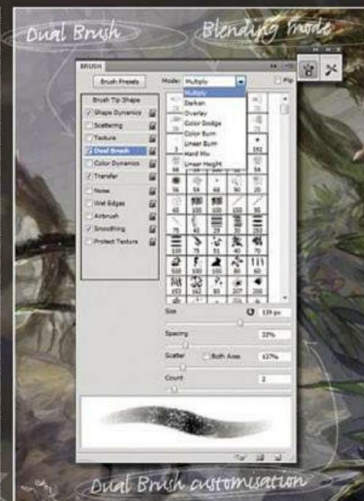


WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH:
CHALK 23 PIXELS 1

I use this brush everywhere: on rocks, roots, the characters, the greenery, the background. This custom dual brush produces a nice texture, depending on what parameters are set, and it's versatile and efficient.



11 Searching for forms

Satisfaction of any intermediate stage of work on a picture is disastrous for any artist. I'd only need half an hour to finish this illustration at this point. Everything could end with a clutch of textures, several adjustment layers and masks and the use of a decent brush. However, I wouldn't achieve a 'wow' image, which is what every artist craves. So I take the long road. Each element must evolve, but I try not to focus too much attention on one point; instead, I'm spreading the work over the entire area of the illustration. Thus, the changes will become smooth and I'm able to keep track of the big picture, so to speak!



12 Working with textures

There are two approaches to the use of textures. The first is when textures are applied as the final finishing stage, thus reinforcing the effects of materials and materiality. The second technique, which I use, is applied during an earlier stage, bringing new structural elements to help to build up the scene. Generally, when I apply texture on objects, depending on the desired effect, I make use of different blending modes. In this case I'm using soft light. On top of the textures I use a mask, which can take the texture to new levels. Try painting in the mask and see what inspires you.

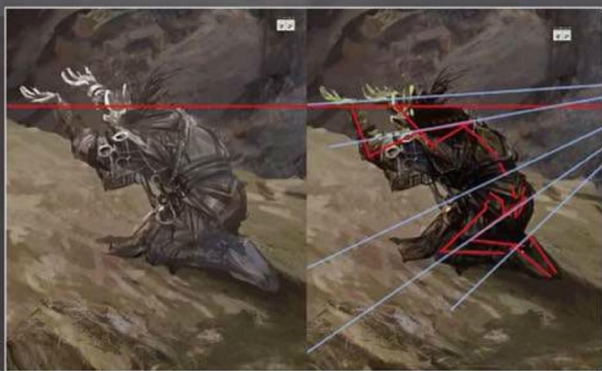
13 Keep the layers organised

During the painting process I keep my layers organised by grouping them into stacks. This enables me to distinguish the different elements within the painting, and makes it easier to alter certain areas of the image. This organisation will also help if you later need to create some animation or cinematics from your artwork, because you'll be able to control the depth and atmosphere of the scene.



14 Mystical feeling

Now I focus on elevating the natural elements to a more mystical, fantastical level. For example, some of the rocks begin to look like pieces of armour, and feature grooves that aren't typically seen in rocky structures – as if someone had etched magical glyphs into the surface. This could also be part of the drawing's story: perhaps it's a magical spell that's keeping the god in captivity. Regardless of their origin, these elements contribute to the general atmosphere in the scene and provide the viewer with plenty of visual interest.



15 Painting the mage

Although the scale of the figure is small, it's an important element of the overall picture. I first adjust the shape of the body and its proportions, its position in space and its posture. I have no firm idea about how it should look and find it easy to arrange a few elements to break up the form. Sometimes it's not necessary to go into specifics. Minor details and accents can only be implied, in turn making the viewer's imagination fill in the blanks. I use an Overlay layer to colour the figure, then overpaint and add a few details to the clothing and individual items.

PRO SECRETS

Alternate view

When you're unsure of the composition, the position of a shape or symmetry of the face of a hero, flip the whole canvas horizontally. You'll immediately see if there are errors.

16 Background development

If the foreground elements are strong then the background has only a supporting role, but even minor components of the image shouldn't be ignored. Ensure that they complement the story, rather than draw attention away from the focal point. Thus, in the background I've placed a head carved into the rock, which may be relevant to the main action but may be part of another story. There's also a silhouette of a soldier guarding the passage to something beyond the rocks on the hill. The background is steeped in haze and has depth of field, increasing the feeling of space in the environment.



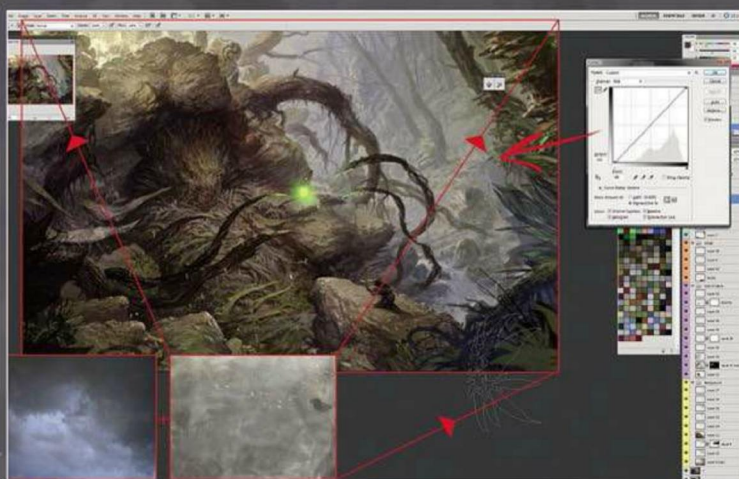
17 All eyes on you

I focus on the heart of the story in this scene: the relic that's awakening the god and the effect that it's having on his minions. Their eyes appear glowing from behind the branches and roots as they stare at the relic, which is once again in the hands of its owner, reviving him and all life therein. I've added flying particles to reinforce the fantasy effect.



18 Final tweaks

I just need to make a few tweaks to tie the whole image together. For example, the god figure needs more contrast. I apply an Adjustment layer as a mask only on the layer that needs correction. When I feel that the right amount of contrast and saturation of colour is achieved, I fill in the mask layer, then remove areas that I want to highlight. I then use several custom brushes to paint different types of leaves and branches.



19 A light touch

Now I use a soft light as a textured layer mode and apply texture across the whole image, adjusting the amount with judicious use of a layer mask. I also apply texture to the image with stock images of the sky, which adds to the atmosphere of the picture. I then separate the foreground from the mid-ground with the help of a new level set to Screen Blend mode and the Gradient tool, which is set from Color to Transparency. The desired effect is like a fog that passes in waves, and further adds depth to the scene. Finally, I colour correct the image and adjust the contrast, using an Adjustment layer.

Painter

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH BRUSH BASICS



Organise your workflow and free up your creative process in the latest version of Painter as **Simon Dominic** reveals his brush basics

Painter 12 organises its brushes into Libraries, Categories and Variants. A Library can hold many Categories, such as Chalk and Oils, and a Category can hold many Variants (brush configurations). While Category and Variant operations are mostly accessed through the workspace, creating a new Library requires a visit to your computer's file system.

You can get started by creating and naming a new folder under Brushes in your Painter 12 Application area. This is your new Library folder. In this folder create another folder for your Category, plus an identically named 30x30 JPG for your Category. Into your Category folder, copy one or more Brush XML files from the Painter 12 Brushes Category folders. Close and restart Painter.

1 Creating Variants and Categories

There's no New Brush function in Painter so instead select Save Variant from the Brush Selector menu. This saves your current Brush configuration to a new Variant, which you can now name and configure. To create a new Category, paint something and select it using the Rectangular Selection tool (Shift+drag to constrain). Then choose Capture Brush Category from the Brush Selector menu.



2 Remembering your Brushes

At the top of the Brush Selector menu are Recent Brushes and Dab & Stroke Preview. Recent Brushes keeps a record of the brushes you've already used, in reverse chronological order, across the top of the Brush Selector. You can also access them using Window>Recent Brushes. Dab and Stroke Preview displays brushstroke previews as you hover over each Brush Variant.



3 Using Dynamic Brush Attributes

Press and hold Ctrl+Alt (Cmd+Opt on the Mac) and drag the cursor to alter the Size of your brush. Maintain pen pressure but release the keys. Now press Ctrl (Cmd) and drag the cursor to alter Opacity. Press Ctrl (Cmd) again to control Squeeze and press a fourth time to control Angle, all the while maintaining pen pressure and dragging as necessary. Release pen pressure to start painting.



Artist PROFILE

Simon Dominic
COUNTRY: England



Simon is a self-taught freelance illustrator who specialises in fantasy, sci-fi and horror. He works primarily on game art, book cover, private commissions, cards and magazines
www.painterly.co.uk

MANAGE YOUR BRUSHES

A. Brush Selector

Click the arrowhead to expand.

B. Recent Brushes

Your most recently used Brushes.

C. Categories

Brush Category list and/or icons.

D. Variants

Brush Variant list and/or icons.

E. Dab and Stroke Preview

Hover over a Variant for a preview.

F. Brush Selector Menu

Choose your brushes here.

G. Display Toggles

Toggle Recent Brush and Dab & Stroke Preview displays.

H. Display Options

Choose either List or Icon format for Variants and Categories.

I. Capture Tools

Capture Dab redefines the Brush shape, while capture Brush Category creates a new Brush Category.

J. Brush Library Menu

Lists all available Brush Libraries.

K. Variant Options

Save Variant creates a new Brush, Set Default Variant makes the current Variant default, while Delete removes the Variant.

L. Copy Variant:

Copies the current Variant to a new Category.

M. Restore Options:

Restore default Variant settings. Alternatively, right-click a Variant icon.



Photoshop THREE WAYS TO BLEND COLOURS

Don Seegmiller demonstrates three methods for blending colours in Photoshop, while painting a rather strange girl walking her pet spider...

Artist PROFILE
Don Seegmiller
COUNTRY: US



Don is a successful artist, author, and instructor. He's part of the faculty in the Visual Communication Department at Utah Valley University and is either the author or co-author of five digital painting books.
www.seegmillerart.com

Blending colours is a basic skill that's often a mystery to the digital artist who's just starting out. In this workshop I'll show different methods that I use on a regular basis to blend while painting in Photoshop.

Blending is about creating a smooth transition between colour and/or value edges while painting. In the past, smooth transitions between colours and values were created using a digital Airbrush.

While these blends were smooth, they often looked artificial and gave a painting an overly slick feeling. There's no doubt that the Airbrush is still an important part of the digital painter's arsenal, but it's been expanded on with a number of additional tools that are available in Photoshop.

During this workshop I'll use a variety of techniques to create soft transitions in colour and value. Although they're not the only options for creating blended

edges and transitions in colour and value, I find that these methods are more than adequate for most of my purposes.

The image was painted in Photoshop CS5. Version 5, with its new Mixer Brush tool, has made it more easier than ever to create natural, hand-painted looking blends. One of the techniques used in the painting relies on this tool. Aside from the CS5 specific technique, the other methods are applicable to earlier versions of Photoshop.



1 Scan the sketch
It all starts with a sketch. In this case I chose this drawing of a rather strange girl. She's intended to look rather ordinary until you notice the tail that's coming out from under her dress. I scan the drawing at 300dpi, which is print resolution, and then open it in Photoshop. I decide to make the image even a bit stranger by painting the girl walking her pet spider. To account for this, I resize the canvas to allow for the eight-legged beastie.



2 Introduce textures
While not strictly "blending", the first thing I do is to place a number of different textures over the original image. I use various blending modes with differing amounts of transparency to create a rich surface on which to paint. The blending modes I use most are Multiply, Screen and Overlay. I'll use the other modes when required. Layering the textures has the added benefit of getting rid of the stark white surface that I find hard to orchestrate values against.



3 Start adding colour
Using the Eraser I remove some of the layered textures over the face area of the girl and some areas in the background. I then merge the layers down onto the canvas. I create a new layer, change its blending mode to Multiply and paint the basic colours of the dress and shawl into the image using the Soft Round 300 brush. Using the Eraser tool, I clean up the edges of the shawl and dress, before creating a new layer and sketching in the spider.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SKULLS



I created two simple skull brushes. One is the original capture without any tweaks and the other was used to paint the pattern on the dress.



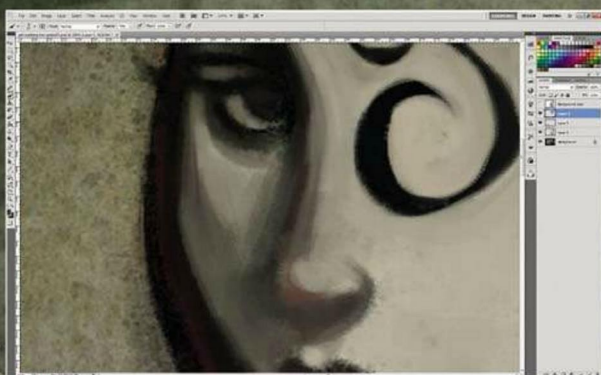
In depth Three ways to use the colours





4 Blocking in the face

I create a new layer, leave it as the default Normal blending mode and begin blocking in the main colours of the face. I make no effort at this point to blend any of the colours – I'm just trying to establish the colour and value harmonies. Any brush can be used for this stage, but one of my favourites is Spatter 14 Pixels because I like the bristly appearance of the brush. I resize, adjust the opacity and adjust the flow of the brush as required.



5 Start blending

Once the main colours are established in the scene I begin blending them together. I use the most basic way of blending colours in Photoshop here. This method consists of painting transparent strokes next to and overlapping each other. This image shows the painting before blending the edges of the colours.



6 Clean up the drawing

Any brush can be used, although I again like using the Spatter 14 Pixels at various sizes and low opacities. While I blend I also re-establish and clean up the drawing using the same brush in higher opacities. I use colours that are already in the painting and only infrequently use the Color Picker. The strokes look rather ragged at 200 per cent magnification, but when viewed at 33 per cent (approximately print size) the strokes blend together well.

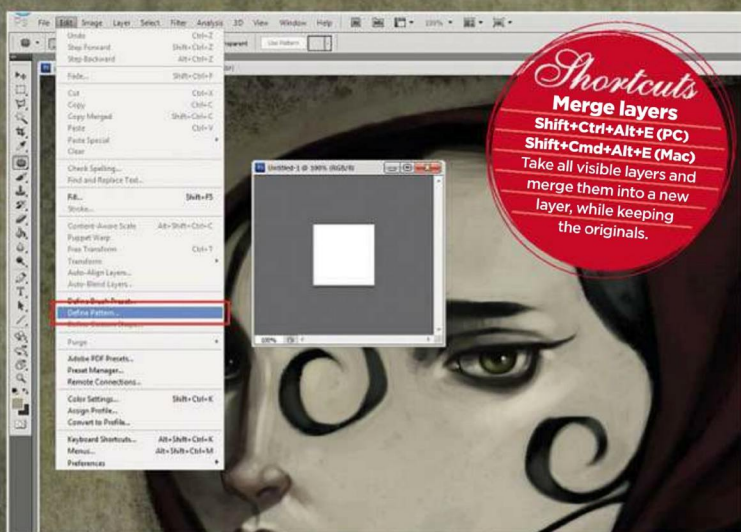
7 Apply Angle Jitter

For a more random blend I turn on Angle Jitter under the Shape Dynamics options in the Brush window and increase the amount significantly. Sometimes I also increase the Size Jitter under the same window and the Dab Spacing under Brush Tip Shape for even more diversity in the stroke. This kind of blending is possible in earlier versions of Photoshop and is a staple technique of most digital painters. I use this technique usually for the initial blending tasks in my paintings.



8 Get healing

Another technique that I employ frequently, to produce smooth blends between areas of value and colour, involves using the Healing Brush tool or the Patch tool. I choose the Healing Brush tool from the Tools palette. It's represented by an icon that looks like a band aid, above the Brush icon.



Shortcuts

Merge layers

Shift+Ctrl+Alt+E (PC)

Shift+Cmd+Alt+E (Mac)

Take all visible layers and merge them into a new layer, while keeping the originals.

9 Define a blank pattern

The Healing Brush tool gives a really smooth blend with minimal effort. There are just a couple of things I need to do before it'll work as I want it to. I first create a new image that is 100x100 pixels. Size doesn't matter and I use a smaller size to conserve resources. Colour also doesn't matter as long as it's solid. With the new image displayed I choose Edit/Define Pattern. In the Pattern Name box I name the pattern "Blank". I then close the small image without saving it, because I won't need it again.



10 Make a zig-zag

With the Healing Brush tool selected I go to the Options menu and set the source as Pattern. I then pick the "Blank" pattern from the Pattern Picker. I make a zig-zag over the edge that I want blended. The stroke paints with the selected pattern and appears white.



PRO SECRETS

Configure the Mixer

The Mixer brush can be a little daunting for the beginner. Most of the problems arise using different slider settings. The key to success using and creating variations of these tools lies within the sliders. The basic adjustment sliders are a bit quirky and for all practical purposes adjustments over 10 per cent have little impact on how the brush behaves. When creating new versions of these tools keep the slider settings low, especially in Wet and Load.

In depth Three ways to blend colours

11 Adjust spacing and size

I end the stroke and lift the stylus – the white disappears leaving a very finely blended area. The softness of the Healing Brush tool as well as the spacing and size can be adjusted for a number of different blending strokes in the options menu at the top of the screen. The wider the zig-zag stroke, the greater the area that's included in the blend.



12 Access the Patch tool

The Patch tool is found by holding the band aid button down and choosing the icon that looks like a small patch in the pop-up palette. I use it in conjunction with my 'Blank' pattern in a similar way to the Healing Brush Tool, by first drawing selection around the area I want blended with the Patch tool.



13 Use with care

I then press the Pattern button and the selected area is filled with a smooth blend. The size of the blend depends on how large an area I select. Unfortunately, there's not any control over the strength of the blended area and overusing this tool will produce boring-looking results.



14 Brush 'n' blend

I continue painting the image using a combination of brushes and blending where appropriate. I try and keep the least blended and highest contrast edges closest to the centre of interest in the image. In this case that's the face. I paint more detail in the spider on its own layer using the same techniques. I then create a skull brush, a new layer, and then paint a pattern over the girl's dress.

15 Add a background

I hand-paint a brick wall and merge it down with the background to give a sense of environment. The spider is textured, detailed and essentially finished. I need to blend the shawl and add a couple of final tweaks. The painting is now in the final stages.

16 Mixer options

I use the new Mixer Brush tool found in Photoshop CS5 to blend the shawl. The tool is accessed by holding down the Brush icon and selecting it from the pop-up menu. With the tool selected a new set of Options become available. These are the basic options that I use to create a blending brush: Wet – how wet my canvas layer or the layer I'm painting on acts; Load – the amount of paint on my brush; Mix – how much the wet and load settings will interact; and Flow, which is similar to the regular Flow setting and dictates how much paint is put down with each stroke.



17 Start experimenting

The best way to get to know how these options interact is to experiment with them. They come in two different styles: Flat brushes and Round brushes. I prefer the Flat variety for most of my blending tasks. I create several different blending brushes that don't apply additional paint, but instead blend the colours already present in the image. I save the brushes as tool presets that I'll use to blend the shawl in my painting.



18 Zig-zag again

Using these tools is no more difficult than other brushes. I simply zig-zag with the brush across the edge that I want to blend and then drag the same brush along the zig-zag stroke. The amount of blend depends on the size of the brush and the size of the zig-zag stroke.



PRO SECRETS

Your saving strategy

I save any image that I'm working on incrementally (adding a numerical suffix) whenever I'm going to make a major change and just after the change. I'll often set a time to go off every 30 minutes reminding me to save my work. It's not unusual for me to have 100 or more saved versions of a painting.

19 Final thoughts

I finish painting the girl's shawl, put a leash on the spider, make a few finishing touches to the overall image, and it's done! Over the course of this relatively simple painting I've used three different ways of blending colours and values. Two of these are available to the digital painter using any version of Photoshop, while the third is specific to the latest version, Photoshop CS5. Learning to use these methods will increase anyone's ability to paint more sophisticated and pleasing work while simplifying the workflow.

Photoshop THE ART OF THE SLOW PAINT

Remko Troost attempts to go cold turkey on the Colour Picker, custom brushes and photo references, while creating a dramatic fantasy image

Artist PROFILE

Remko Troost
COUNTRY: Canada



Born and raised in Amsterdam, Netherlands, with tons of

cheese and Drop (Dutch candy), Remko works as a senior concept artist at Ubisoft Montreal, Canada. From a traditional background, he now primarily uses 2D digital mediums such as Photoshop, Painter or ArtRage. www.pandraw.com

Lately I've got really into speed-painting. It teaches you how to build and use your brushes, as well as layer modes and the application of colours. Furthermore, there's no time for smoothly blending out things because you have to get straight to the point.

It's an awesome exercise that I always learn a lot from. But a desire to go slow started to come back to me. I wanted to take the time to create, design, think about my picture, the story behind it, go back and forwards, blend and endlessly paint details. This is where I decided to totally step back from most of the

advantages that digital media offers, take a basic Round brush and let go of myself on a subject we all love: dragons!

I could only paint it every now and then, and even though I used some custom brushes in the end, for the out-of-focus parts, it took me ages. That's why I call it a slow-painting!

1 Doodling and sketching

This picture is about Iracnory, the last female dragon on Earth. She has to be brought to a safer place, so she can give birth to her babies and maintain the dragon race. I start by doing a sketch, with a simple black pen on 90g copy paper. I want to capture her somewhere on the long journey to safety, perhaps sitting, resting on a rock for example. I'm not interested in producing a nice, clean illustration, so using Photoshop I just try to find some interesting lines to start off with.



2 Scan and prepare my line work

I scan my sketch (I can't wait for the Inking! My scanner wakes everybody up) in 600dpi. I need a big file so that I can go into great detail. I clean up my line work, using Levels (Ctrl+L), by pulling the outside sliders to the inside. I don't need my outlines to be that clean, so I drop my layers and paint over my line work.

3 Work your values

Some artists say you should start in black and white, to better concentrate on your values. On the other hand, if you start directly with colours you learn a lot, too. I like to switch between techniques and styles: it keeps things fresh and gives me a new challenge to learn from. In this case I start in black and white. For now I just want to focus on my lighting and values – nothing else.



PRO SECRETS

Leave your comfort zone

Constantly repeating things you already mastered stops you from learning. It's important to keep on sketching and training in order to expand the visual library in your head and improve your art.





4 Add colours

There are several ways to colour your black and white picture. You could duplicate your layer several times and use Hue/Saturation (Ctrl+U) on each one and erase what you don't need. In this case I paint my colours on a layer above my black and white image. I set the layer to Overlay or Color mode and, quite roughly, I paint in my first colours using a basic Round brush. I keep it basic, just to see where I'll be heading. Then I drop my layers and keep on painting with colour on just one layer.

5 The painting grows while you draw

As you might have noticed, I started with a big bad knight sitting on the dragon's back to protect her, but then I decided to head for smoother curves and put a mysterious female fighter on top of the dragon instead. This often happens when I choose to take my time over a painting. It can be down to those good ol' happy accidents, or just the fact that as the painting evolves, the universe you're in becomes clearer and new ideas pop up. Here I experiment with different poses of the rider, each on a different layer, and pick one that best suits the mood of the painting.



6 The background

I'm trying to keep as close as possible to a traditional approach on this painting, so most of time I only use one layer. I prefer painting over my errors and trying not to use Undo too much. This also adds texture and material to the final image. Here, with a custom-textured Round brush, I paint the background first. Just as in traditional painting (oils for example), I go from dark to clear and from the background to the foreground. Still on one layer, I try hard to fight against my natural instincts to use Undo. Instead, if an error does occur I just paint on top of it. In the end this gives you more material and texture in the picture. It's good to practise this painting approach.



7 Blocking in details

It's time to start on the details and to do this I use a basic Round brush with Pen Pressure on. I use 100 per cent Opacity and 60 per cent Flow. Blending your colours becomes smoother with lower brush flows. Try to find your Flow setting – it varies on each brush. Don't forget you can also set different pressure levels on your Wacom, which can change a lot. I try not to use the Color Picker too much, instead choosing my colours by eye. I develop a painterly feeling this way, because of the resulting colour variations.

PRO SECRETS

Create brush subfolders

I don't like to have many brushes at the same time, because scrolling through them just takes too much time. Create specific brush files that focus on one goal, like speed-painting, organic shapes or sci-fi forms. In the upper-right corner of your brushes window is a triangle. Click it to load or replace brushes. In the same place you'll find a Preset Manager that enables you to organise your brushes.

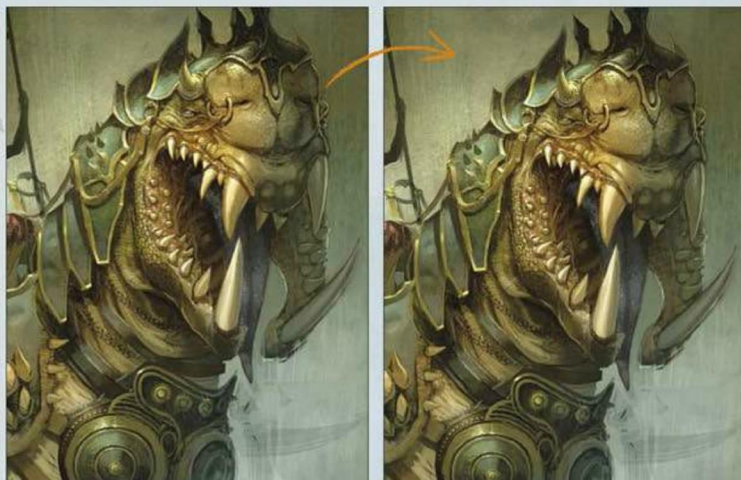
Shortcuts

Scale or rescale
Opt+Shift and drag
(PC & Mac)

With the Marquee tool or Free Transform, this scales proportionally from the centre.

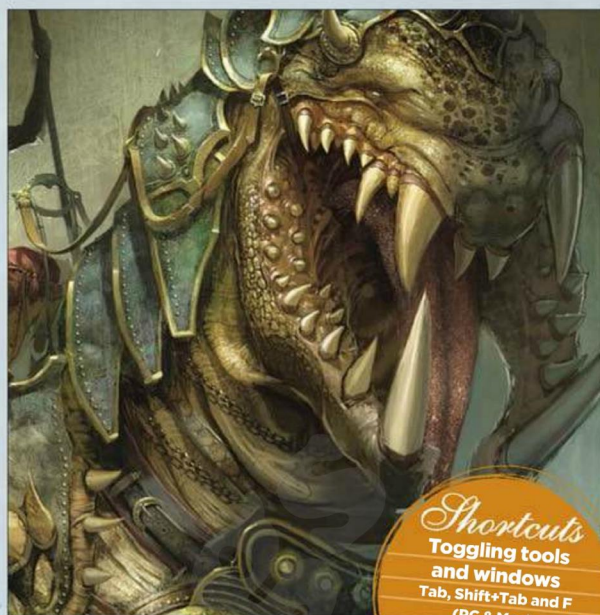
8 Changing again

I started this dragon's head with some kind of rodent animal in my mind, but I find it doesn't really work – it didn't suit the dragon – so I start again. Here's where the digital medium is a real advantage: it enables you to change whatever you want in your painting whenever you want, no matter where you are in your process. I simply put a layer above and try out new heads till this one comes up. I feel it works well.



9 Flipping and detailing

There are some buttons on my keyboard that I rarely use in Photoshop, so I set them up as shortcuts of common commands. For example, F2 flips my image. Flipping your image is useful: it helps you to detect proportional or composition problems sooner rather than later. Here I keep on detailing with minimal use of the Zoom tool, which means I can keep an eye on the overall image. Alternatively, keep the Navigator window open next to your canvas. In this way you can zoom and work out details, but always see how the entire image is developing.



Shortcuts Toggling tools and windows

Tab, Shift+Tab and F (PC & Mac)

Big time-savers – handy when you've only got one screen.

10 Play time

Custom brushes are great for speeding up the workflow which, after spending hours on the same image, is a godsend. I use a basic Round brush to make the rivets on the Dragon's armour, with the space in between them set to 235 (see Natural Media Brush menu). I also use a custom brush for the ornaments on the golden roundels of the chest armour, with the spaces set to 150, and in Shape Dynamics I put Angle Variation on Direction, so that it follows my moves.

11 Final details and fine-tuning

Because my image uses just one layer I duplicate it a couple of times, for the final details, tweaking and tuning without taking risks. I like to play around with Levels, Hue/Saturation and Color Balance. You can tweak the overall image or just a particular colour. In Levels, to manipulate just one colour, select it inside the Levels window, using the slider. I like to create out-of-focus points with Blur effects or sharpen details, to grab the viewer's eye. She's now ready to take off to safer places.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

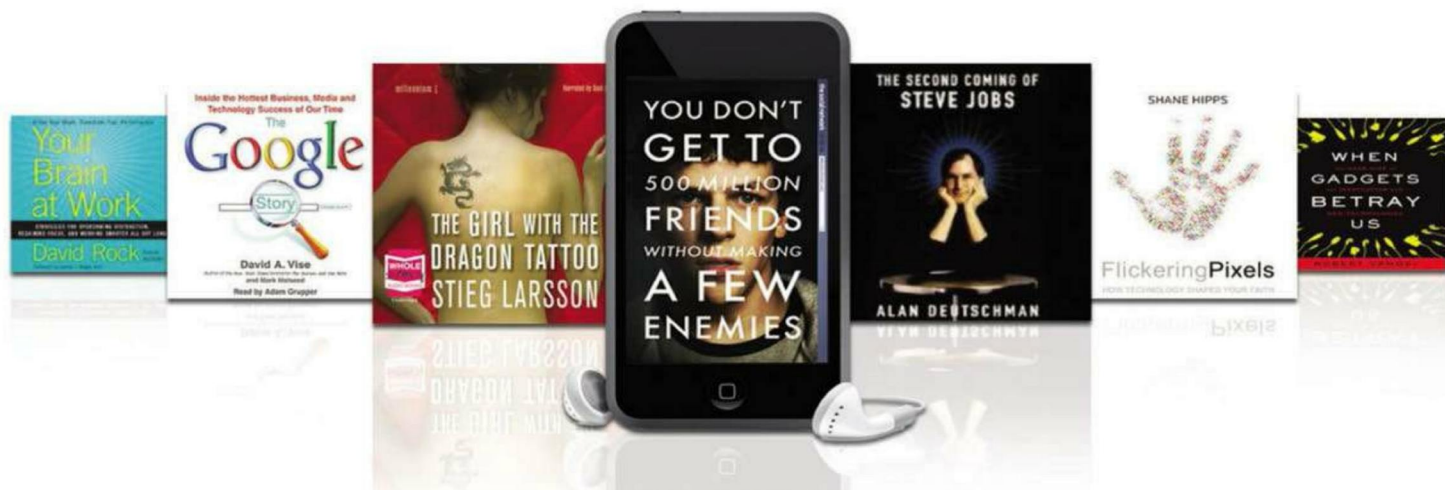
PAINT01



A very handy brush for obtaining a painterly feeling. Either use it from the start to quickly block in your shapes, or for the finishing touches, by painting in Overlay. It works great with Pen Pressure on, Opacity at 100 per cent and Flow at 70 per cent.



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Photoshop

BE INSPIRED BY RACKHAM'S STYLE

Sean Andrew Murray shows how you can capture that magical, mixed-media look of Arthur Rackham's timeless fantasy illustrations

Artist PROFILE

Sean Andrew Murray
COUNTRY: US



Sean is the principal concept artist at Big Huge Games/38

Studios and a freelance illustrator. He's been working for the past several years on Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning, an action-RPG that's due out in February 2012. www.seanandrewmurray.com

All artists should look beyond themselves and their contemporaries for inspiration, both in subject matter and in technique. I find looking at old-master illustrators a great way to discover new ways to work, and who better than Arthur Rackham?

I love line work, so it's no wonder that Rackham is one of my all-time favourite illustrators from the early 20th century. He's highly regarded for his illustrated versions of classic myths, children's

stories and fairy tales such as Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Fairy Tales of the Brother's Grimm and Gulliver's Travels. Rackham's work was a big part of how I developed my own traditional and digital painting techniques, all of which rely heavily on good drawing and well-executed line work.

His style blended whimsical playfulness with dark foreboding, as seen in his many depictions of faeries, witches and enchanted forests. His flowing, expressive line work complemented his

subdued and often desaturated colour palettes to create an ethereal, dream-like quality that's instantly recognisable.

To achieve this look, I'll start by looking to Rackham's biggest source of inspiration: nature. I'll also show you how to approach a digital piece in a simple, straightforward manner using minimal brushes, layers and tricks. Instead, I'll take a classical approach to this very non-classical medium of digital painting, and hopefully in so doing, create something fresh and unique.

1 Read up on Rackham

I have a few books on Arthur Rackham, so I start by pulling those off my bookshelf and thumbing through them. It's good to be inspired by other artists – it can often give you ideas for how to push your own technique. Ironically, achieving the look of various traditional illustration techniques with your digital work is a good way to stand out from the crowd. Because I gravitate towards Rackham's depictions of gnarly trees in fairy tale scenes, I decide to use this as my inspiration for my own piece.



2 Sketch it out

I use a mechanical pencil with .3mm B leads and a kneaded eraser. Aside from Photoshop and a Wacom Tablet, these are my two most essential art tools and I carry them with me everywhere. It's important to sketch with tools that you're comfortable with, but sometimes it takes experimentation to find them. I keep my sketch loose yet descriptive, because I'll be using it as the basis for my line work.

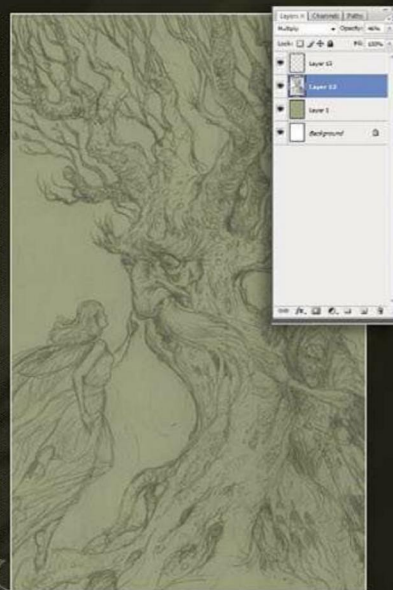


3 Take it outside

I'm an advocate of using research at various stages in the process, and sometimes it makes more sense to do visual research after you have your idea and your sketch nailed. This will keep you loose during the sketch phase. It just so happens that I'm in the beautiful Hudson Valley of New York the weekend I'm working on this sketch, so I head outside and find some gnarly old trees to photograph and use as reference.

4 The virtual lightbox

Now I take my sketch, scan it into Photoshop, make it into its own separate Multiply layer, fill a layer underneath the sketch with a neutral tone (using Rackham as inspiration I choose a neutral brown, but grey is fine if you aren't sure about colour yet), and finally reduce the opacity of the sketch layer so that it's just dark enough to see without being distracting. This mimics the use of a lightbox with traditional media.





PRO SECRETS

Add some imperfections

Simple things can give your digital work the feel of traditional media. Drawing black 'ink' lines with the opacity set at 80 or 90 per cent gives the lines a slight washy feel when they overlap, like you might get with real India ink. One hundred per cent black is just too flat and unnatural. You can also do the same with the Eraser tool and produce a scratchboard effect when erasing out lines or large areas of black.

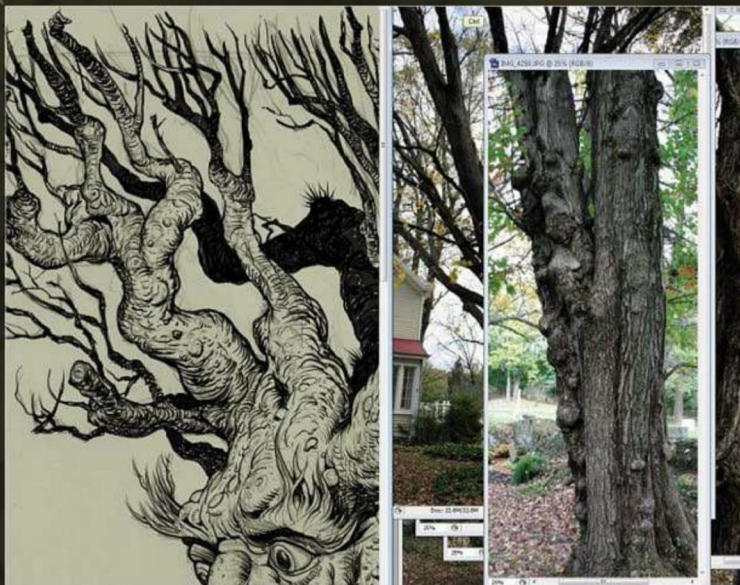
5 Digital ink and brush

Now comes the fun part. I create a new brush (Rackham_ink_01) that gives me a nice Rackham-like look to my line work. Line work combined with colour washes was typical for illustration in this period, because it was easier to reproduce with existing printing technology. Rackham's line work was distinct: fluid and dynamic, so in similar fashion I'm staying loose. I use pure black, but at a reduced opacity, somewhere between 80 and 90 per cent usually.



6 Follow the forms

Rackham's inking style tended to rely less on hatching, which tends to flatten, and more on using lines to define form and volume. As you can see in the thicker branches, I'm using the lines to draw around the circumference of the branches, like multiple tiny belts. In the thinner extremities I use a faster, flowing line that runs along the length of those branches, emphasising the sweeping nature. I show value by increasing the density of the line work.



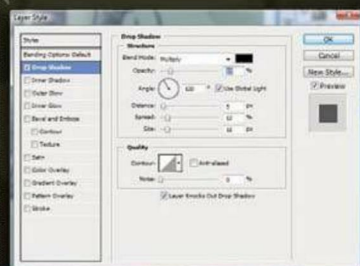
8 Don't overdo it

Pen and ink lines can often start to feel overworked. Take care as you put the finishing touches on your line work to avoid the pitfall of worrying that you haven't drawn enough lines. Your final drawing should feel balanced and be able to stand on its own without colour. Working digitally means it's easier to get rid of areas that are overworked, than with traditional pen and ink.



9 That etched feel

Something I do occasionally is add a bit of a shadow to the line work to give it a quasi-etching feel, which I believe Rackham's work sometimes had, given his crisp lines and the subtle watercolour washes that often created a reverse-halo effect around his subjects. I think this gives the lines a bit more ethereal gravitas. Here I'm basically just using the drop shadow layer style, and keeping it subtle.



7 Line logic

Although much of Rackham's work is often very detailed, he rarely drew lines that didn't have a purpose. This encourages me to be more efficient with my line work than I usually tend to be. This is especially important when your subject, like a faerie, needs to feel light, smooth and airy. Use too much line work and your faerie's face might start to look old and ponderous.



10 Finally, colour!

Now I can turn off my sketch layer and make a layer underneath the final line art. I start loosely blocking in areas of colour with a thick, textured brush. Rackham typically worked with watercolour washes over his line art, keeping them light – perhaps to avoid dulling the line work too much. This gave his work a subdued and almost monotone palette, and kept the line work prominent. Here then, I avoid getting too heavy too early.

11 Colour choices

This is the stage where I like to experiment with the colour palette while keeping the camera zoomed out. It's generally a good idea to work out your basic palette early at a size where you can see the whole piece. You want the viewer's first read to be eye-catching from a distance, or at a small size, so they're compelled to stay with it. Don't worry about colouring within the lines yet. It's too early for that. Stay loose!



12 Shadow and light

Once you're happy with your overall palette, it's time to think about lighting. Rackham's work rarely had strong light sources, opting instead for a more diffuse, general lighting. If a character even had a shadow, it would generally be as a plot device rather than an attempt to be realistic. However, I decide that a few subtle shadows will add depth to the piece. I also block in areas that can be in-shadow, like much of the witch's body. This prevents it from distracting from the focal points, and also provides some surprising details to be discovered once you go deeper into the image.



Shortcuts Step back in History

Ctrl+Alt+Z (PC)
Cmd+Alt+Z (Mac)
Undo until you reach the
limit of your History
memory.

PRO SECRETS

Introduce texture

Adding a layer of texture, like a hi-res image of yellow parchment paper, can help to unify your colours and add a bit of age to the piece. You can do it at any stage, but keep it subtle. Make the layer either Multiply, Screen or Overlay and reduce the opacity of the layer way down to five per cent or so, but take time to play with it. This is just a way to give your piece a little extra magic at the end...



13 Refinement

Still working in a layer underneath the drawing, I clean up the messier parts and solidify the colour palette. I'm careful not to build up too much colour on elements that are less important. This happens a lot when you forget to take a step back and evaluate the balance of your colour.



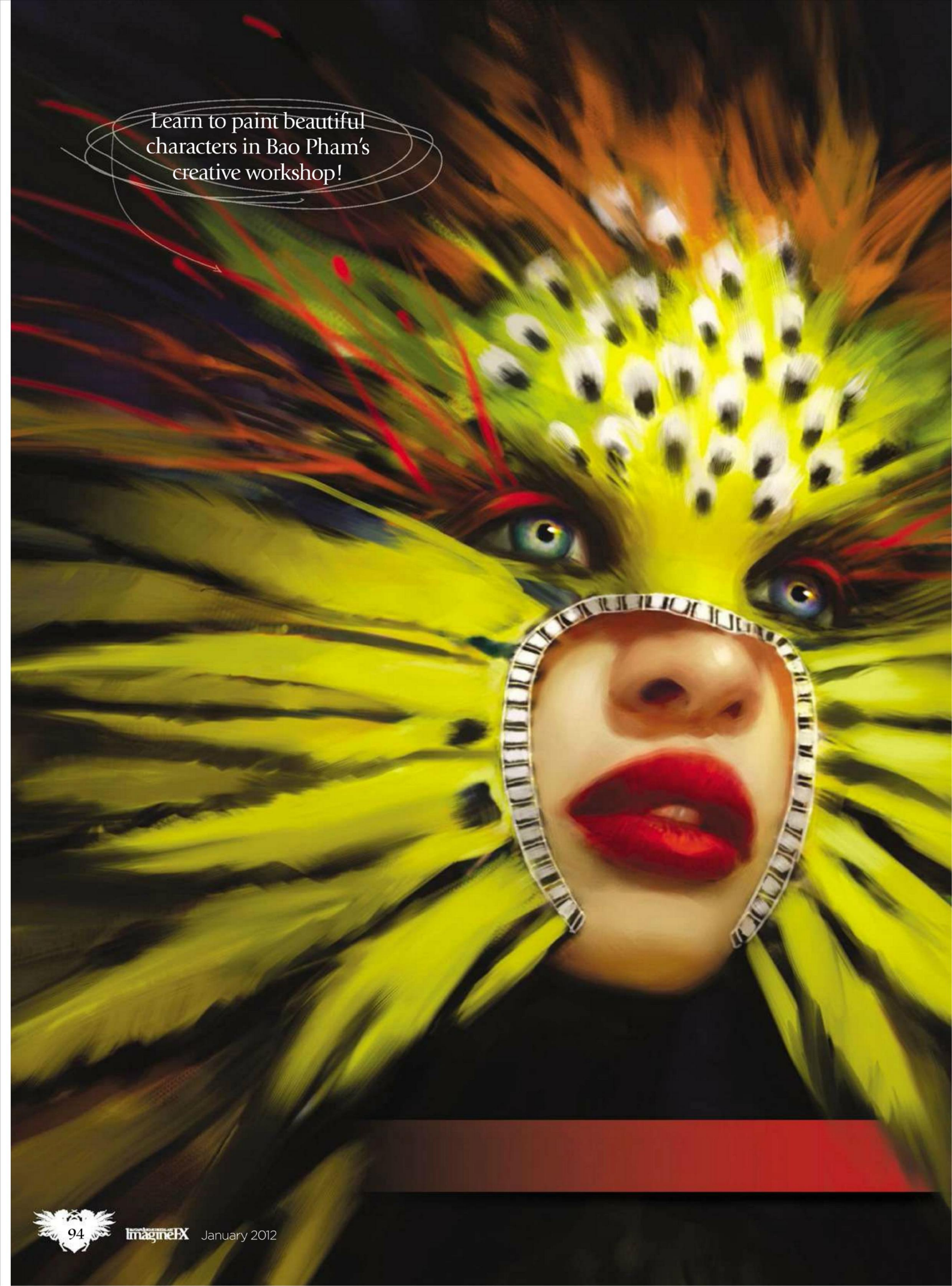
14 The small stuff

Now I can finally zoom in tighter and start adding finishing touches and details. This is the right time to add a few well-placed highlights, but I don't need them everywhere – just where we can reasonably assume the light would be hitting the strongest. I use some blue-green rim-light on the tree-spirit's face to give the impression of a spectral glow from the fairy's dress. A touch of airbrush on certain highlights can give things like the fairy's wings and dress a slight "bloom" effect, and reinforce the diffuse lighting overall.

15 Finishing touches

With the final few details painted in, and a little time spent on an amoebic, cloudy background (using what I call my 'crud' brushes) the piece is finished! Interestingly, working this way – with digital ink and watercolour – is a fairly forgiving and re-workable method, unlike actual ink and watercolour. You can experiment with different palettes without disturbing the line work layer, and you can erase ink lines without worry, so I really enjoy it. I hope that you do too!





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characters in Bao Pham's
creative workshop!

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Next month in...
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
New year... new art!

Start 2012 the right way, with art advice
from legendary artists **John Howe**
and **James Gurney**, on drawing
techniques and world building.



PLUS!

Get more from your iPad
and create art anywhere,
with Karl Simon.

Also

New species!

Creature designer Wayne
Barlowe shares his new
art and inspiration.

New opportunities!

Inspiring ways to make
sure that 2012 will be your
best year for art yet!

New job!

What does it take to be
a concept artist? We visit
Rocksteady Studios...

ISSUE 79 ON SALE 6 JANUARY 2012

ArtRage & Painter MIX AND MATCH YOUR PAINT TOOLS

Paint to your software's strength, explains **Simon Dominic** in an exclusive excerpt from 3DTotal's Digital Painting Techniques: Volume 3

One of the most recognisable characters in folklore is the troll, even though they come in all shapes and sizes. While some trolls are depicted as huge and hulking, others are described as being similar to normal folk, distinguishable from humans only by their rough clothing and questionable habits.

For this painting I've decided to paint a portrait rather than an action scene, and to set it in a forest environment. A portrait

approach will result in a more formal character depiction, but will allow for full focus on the character. My troll will be an important personage in the troll community and hence will be dressed more elaborately than his peers. That doesn't mean his clothing will be pristine however, as the forest can be a messy place and trolls aren't renowned for their cleanliness. In terms of weapons I'm going to give my troll a huge, oaken staff that doubles as a club. Trolls tend to make

use of the resources around them, so I think that a basic, natural weapon like a club is more fitting to a forest setting than a sword or a magical item.

To complete this image I'll be using ArtRage Studio Pro and Painter 11. I'll do the concepts and sketching in ArtRage and move on to Painter for the colouring and final detail. Either package would be sufficient to complete the entire project, but ArtRage's strengths are in sketching and Painter's in detailing.



1 Quick concepts

I create half a dozen sketches, each depicting a different type of troll. I use the default pencil and canvas in ArtRage – I find that the rough feel closely mimics using a real pencil. Using these concepts as a guide I choose the third character as the one I want to develop.

2 Linework

Still in ArtRage, I create a small canvas with the same aspect ratio as the spec for my final image. I load my concept sketch as a reference so that I have a constant on-screen guide as to what I want to achieve. Next I create a new layer and draw a few rough perspective lines to an imaginary vanishing point that's way off to the left. I make the outline sketch onto a new layer. This stage is designed to give a basic, clean indication of all the main elements of my character.



3 Sketch detail

I increase the canvas size to about half the intended final dimensions. This will allow for more detail to be laid down. To compensate for this I also increase my pencil Nib Size to around 200 per cent. I reduce the opacity of my linework layer to 30 per cent and create a third layer on top. Using the low opacity linework as a guide, I create a detailed sketch of my character.



Artist PROFILE

Simon Dominic
COUNTRY: England



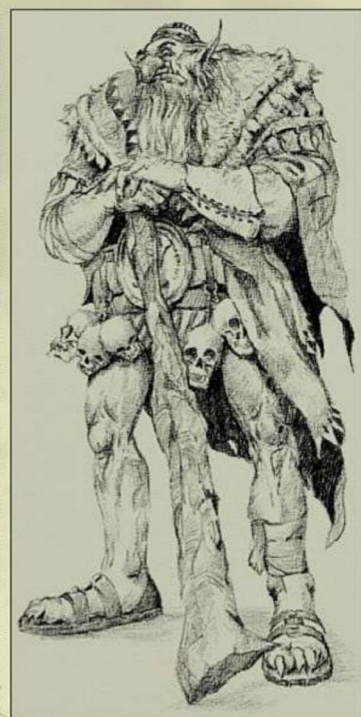
Simon is a regular contributor to ImagineFX, and a self-

taught illustrator specialising in sci-fi, fantasy and horror art. This workshop is taken from Digital Painting Techniques Volume 3, on sale now priced £30 from www.3dtotal.com/shop. www.painterly.co.uk

PRO SECRETS

Adjust your Painter tools

When applying almost no pressure the brush behaves more like a blender and helps to create graduated yet textured blends between light and shadow. To obtain a high degree of control over your pen sensitivity you should experiment with different settings in both your tablet settings application and via your Edit>Preferences>Brush Tracking menu option in Painter.



4 Clean up

The first two layers – the perspective lines and the linework sketch – have served their purpose, so I delete them. This leaves me with the detailed sketch on a single layer. I save this as a PSD file because the next time I work on it I'll be using Painter.



5 Build a colour palette

When painting, I find it helpful to work from a pre-created colour palette. To create one I open a blank canvas in Painter and use my Artists' Oils brush to make a sequence of splodges representing the main elements that will be in my image: bright yellows for the sky; deep browns, oranges and greys for clothing material; mid-saturation, mid-value pinks for the skin tone; and finally white for the hair. I then click the Create Color Set From Mixer Palette option. This generates a 256-color color set palette, which I save as a PCS file (Painter Colour Set).



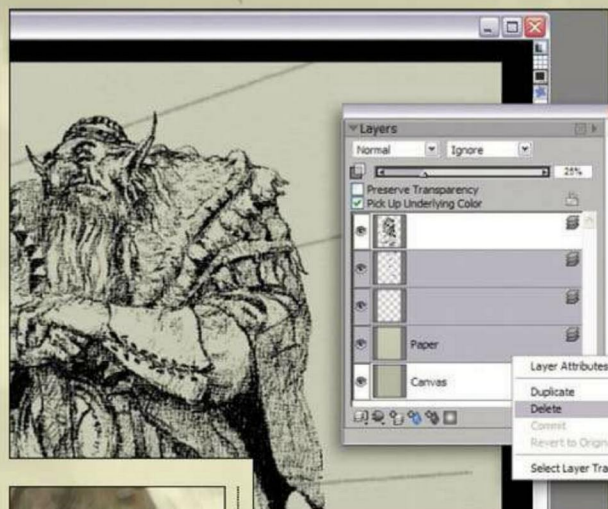
PRO SECRETS

Save your art

During this workshop Painter has been - backups of the file every time I've saved (Edit>Preferences>General, tick Create Backup on Save), which I do regularly. I also back up my files onto a separate disk at the end of the day. For the sake of just a minute or two per day this can save a lot of hassle and stress!

6 Load the PSD into Painter

Because ArtRage processes paint in a different manner to Painter, PSDs that have been exported from ArtRage usually have a number of extra layers. I load the PSD into Painter and see that there are two blank layers and a paper layer in addition to the canvas and sketch layer. In this instance I remove both blank layers and the paper layer, although if you prefer the paper layer colour to the canvas colour you may want to simply remove the two blank layers and drop the paper layer to the canvas.



7 Under-painting

I use my "Under-painting" Artists' Oils brush to lay down a rough approximation of my chosen colours. This is simply to act as a guide to the proper painting. I choose a simple background that acts as an anchor for the character while providing a hint of his environment. I'll be painting the background in low-contrast hues so that the main figure stands out.

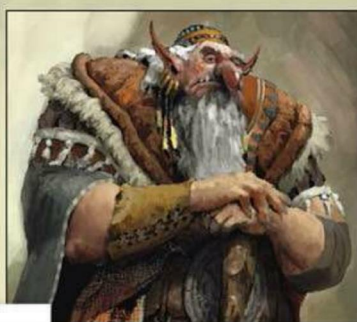
8 Upsize the image

I'm ready to begin the final painting process so I upsize my image to its working dimensions using Canvas>Resize, making sure that Constrain File Size isn't ticked. Before I start painting I drop the sketch layer to the canvas so that the image is flat (in terms of layers). I select the Artists' Oils brush and begin adding rough detail to the troll, starting with the head and face. Because the expression of the troll is important, I work using a relatively small brush, about 10 pixels, with the zoom set at 100 per cent.



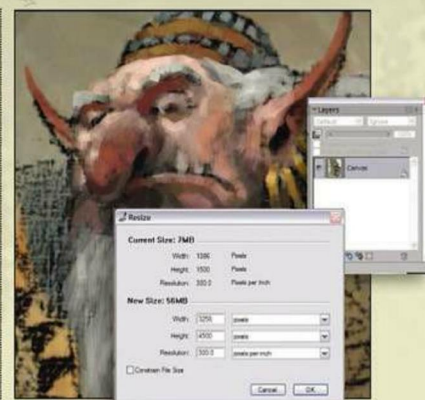
9 Use the largest brush possible

When painting larger areas, especially at this stage, it's a good rule of thumb to use the biggest brush possible. So instead of using the 10 pixel width brush on the troll's exposed arms, or flowing cloak, I increase the size to 15 or 20 pixels. Of course, as detail increases the size of the brush will decrease.



10 Introduce lighting and texture

Understanding the ways different materials react to light is key to creating a believable image. Here I combine a number of different materials to form the troll's garb, ranging from dull drapery to the thick, calloused, fur-lined leather covering his shoulders. I depict the leather as having more surface variations of hue, saturation and value than the thin material of his robe, and also slightly more specularity. Even more specularity is present on his skin, on the skulls around his waist and also on the monstrous staff he's leaning on, as a result of the wood being worn smooth over time.



11 Rough out the background detail

To finish off the rough detail work I move on to the background. I increase my brush size to around 30 pixels for this stage. To depict bark on the tree I cross horizontal and vertical bark textures so that the tree's bulk is evident in three dimensions and it doesn't look flat. By easing up on the pen pressure I can blend certain areas so that the texture doesn't overpower the troll. I also darken the area under his feet. This is to anchor the character with the background.



12 Painting leaves

Selecting low-saturation colours from my palette, I dab at the ground plane, creating flecks that, from a distance, resemble leaves. I'll be refining these shapes later on. For now it's sufficient that these leafy shapes remind me of leaves and are roughly the right colour.



13 Variations in colour

I'm about to begin the fine detail stage and this involves using the Round brush. One trick to improve the painterly appearance of detail is to use the Color Variability settings. I select In HSV from the pull-down and set the sliders to H: 4%, S: 1%, V: 1%. This means that every time I make a mark with the brush, the colour hue that I've chosen will change randomly within a four per cent tolerance of my original colour choice. In the same way, the saturation and value will change randomly within a one per cent tolerance.



14 Detailed texturing

With my small, Round brush set to between 5 and 12 pixels, I move over the character and boost the detail level, adding scuffing, staining and dirt on his clothes. Next, the troll's hands are a key part of this image, so attention needs to be paid to the light and shadow, which define the form. The troll's left hand is covering his right, which is wrapped around the head of the staff. The shadows are therefore placed to be consistent with our light source. Where the fingers of the right hand grip the wood I use a slightly desaturated highlight to simulate reflected light from the environment. This helps to give solidity to the hand.



15 Resize the skulls

The skulls on the left appear smaller than they should, even taking into account the slight perspective that's going on. I select them roughly and copy the contents. I remove the selection area and paste the skulls into a new layer. Using Edit>Free Transform I enlarge the selection object while holding down Shift. I choose Edit>Transform>Commit Transformation and then drop the selection onto the canvas. I also neaten the edges a little so it blends with the image.

16 Robe material

To paint the orange robe material I enlarge the Round brush to between 10 and 20 pixels. Varying the pen pressure is key in this painting process. In the dark shadows I press quite hard so that the dark paint is applied thickly, while elsewhere I ease up on the pressure so that the paint is more opaque and blends more readily with existing colours.

17 Scarred skin

It's safe to assume this troll has had a hard life, so the skin around his knees and shins will be scarred and pockmarked. With light brush strokes I make a few dark lines and dots on the skin. To make them appear etched into the skin I make faint highlights on the edges, especially the lower edges being that our light source is above. Lastly, I add a bit of dark paint to his knee to represent dirt and scuff marks.



18 Wood texture

If you're not careful the wood texture can end up looking like skin or cloth. To avoid this I use darker, more saturated colours for the wood base colour. I add desaturated specular highlights to the staff to simulate old, worn wood. Placing some of the bright highlights onto the dark areas make it appear as if the wood is dark, rather than in shadow.

19 Autumn leaves

I use the Artists' Oils brush to further define the leaves on the ground. I focus on getting the colours right, and leave the shapes quite rough. I use a selection of lighter, desaturated colours for the leaves and dab deep purples and black at their periphery to suggest the shadow and dark earth beneath.



20 See the bigger picture

When painting the leaves it's easy to tackle one leaf after another. This can flatten the image because each leaf has the same value and saturation. Zooming out helps you see how your leaves are becoming part of the scene. I want the leaves in the foreground to be larger and more colourful than those at the side of the troll or behind him. I also fade out the leaves at the edges to create focus on the character. Finally, I darken the area below him and to his right to simulate shadow.



21 Tackling the tree

For the tree and the rest of the background I use only low-saturation colours of mid- to high-value. This is to give a sense of depth and so they don't compete with the troll. Keeping it loose, and still using the Artists' Oils brush, I dab in darker lines that run up the tree trunk. At irregular intervals I sketch small, rough arcs perpendicular to these lines to give the subtle appearance of bulk.

22 Final detailing

I move around the painting, adding some final detail with the Round brush. I don't want to refine the leaves too much so I just spend a few minutes tweaking the brush strokes into more leafy shapes. It's better to suggest the impression of leaves rather than to render each one. I also extend the length of the troll's cloak a little. Using the Round brush I then refine some of the tree detail – the fungus and area of discoloured bark especially. The level of detail remains much less than that of the troll, so that the background doesn't compete for attention.



Shortcuts
Dynamic brush
resize
Shift+drag (PC & Mac)
Modifies brush size in
ArtRage without 100 per
cent size limit.

23 Finally, a bit of texture

As a final touch I choose the Artists' Canvas Paper and, using the Round brush at a large size, dab in a few textures in the corners of the image, just to make it a bit more interesting. I set the painting aside for a few days so I can come back to it with a fresh perspective. When I look at it next I see that the rear hanging edge of the troll's cloak appears too dark, drawing the eye into an unintentional focal point. I zoom into the shadowed areas and use the Artists' Oils brush to dab in a low value ochre colour.

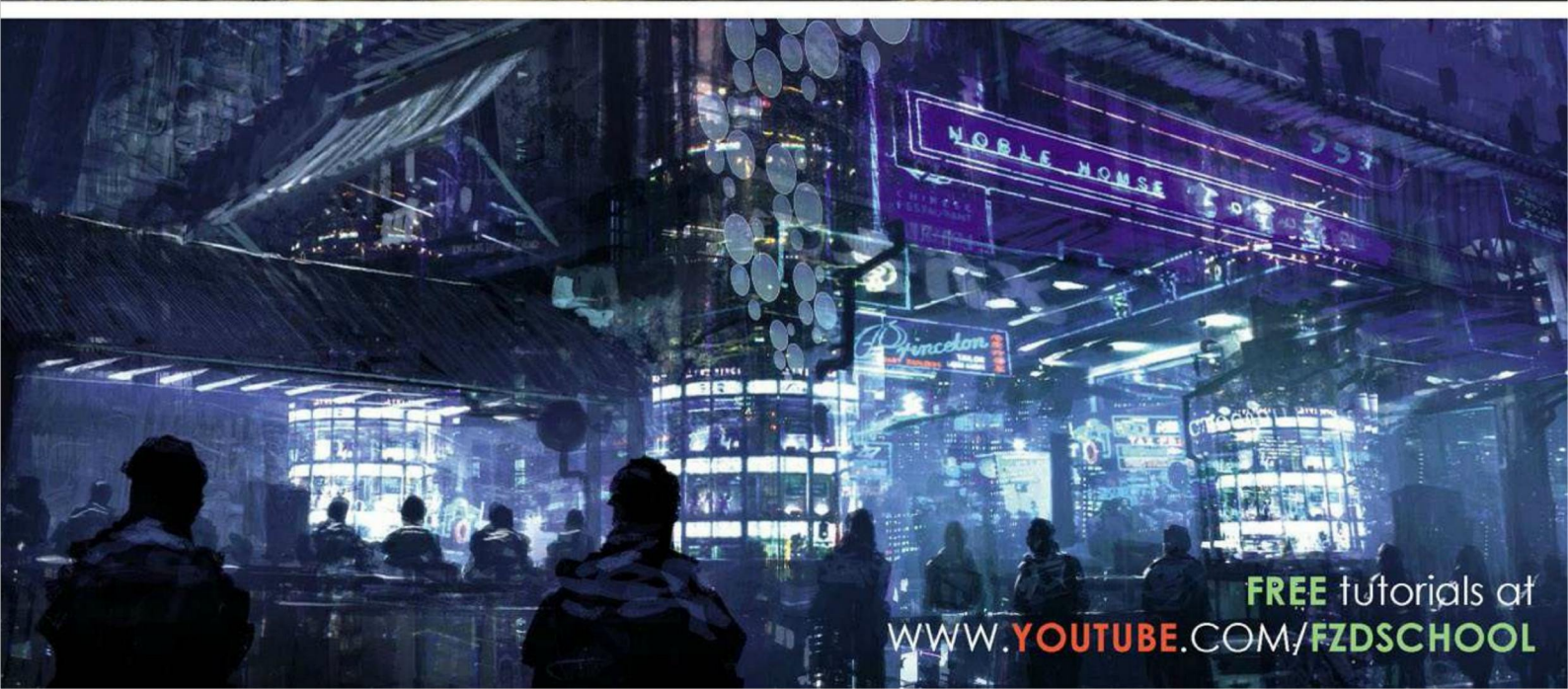




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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...

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ON TEST



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It's here. And it's amazing. Maybe even revolutionary.

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104 Poser Pro 2012

3D pros and figure designers get their own version of Poser.

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For glowing swirls and magic effects.

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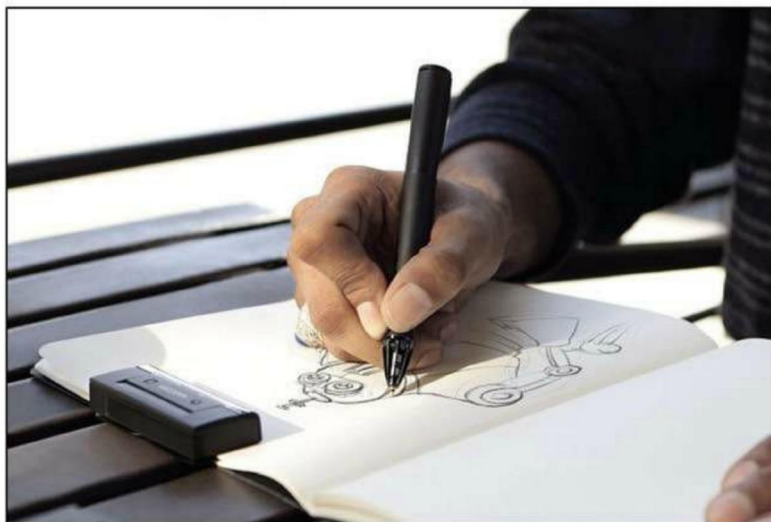
RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious



Inkling

GAME CHANGER Providing a link between your sketchbook and your digital painting software, the Inkling is a truly revolutionary product...

Price £150 **Company** Wacom **Web** www.wacom.eu **Contact** 44 (0) 207 744 08 31



We've got more than an inkling that Wacom's new hardware could transform the artistic process for many in the digital art world.

The Inkling is a revolutionary product for digital artists. In short, it enables you to turn sketches from your traditional sketchbook into a digital format in double-quick time, without scanning or tracing.

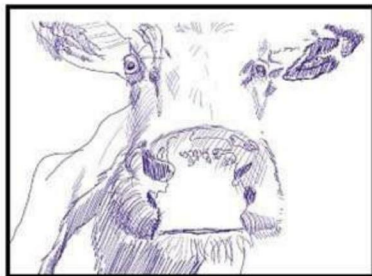
How? Well, it's quite simple. The Inkling consists of a pen (with a normal ball-point nib) and a receiver. Clip the receiver to your sketchbook, start drawing and your strokes are captured. You can even add layers as you go, by just hitting the button on top of the receiver.

Next, plug the receiver into a USB port and, using the Inkling Sketch Manager software, you can export your sketches to Photoshop or SketchBook Pro as a raster file,

USING THE INKING

How to draw with Wacom's marvel...

First, turn on the receiver and clip it to the top of your sketchbook or paper (it'll clip on 10 sheets or thereabouts). Make sure it's attached firmly. As you start to draw on your sketchbook, the lights on the receiver and end of the pen go green, indicating that there's a connection between the two.



As you draw, you can add layers to the digital sketch by hitting the button on top of the receiver. These will translate directly into Photoshop or SketchBook Pro. There's also pressure sensitivity here, so your drawing on paper will reflect your digital file in terms of thickness and strength or line. Don't block the tip area of the pen as you draw and maintain a 2cm distance between receiver and drawing.



Once you're done, turn off the receiver and unclip it. Then either start another drawing or plug the receiver into a USB port. Inking Sketch Manager opens, showing you all the sketches stored on the receiver. You can browse them all here. If you have Photoshop, Illustrator, SketchBook Pro or Designer installed you can quickly export - with layers intact - to these apps by selecting the drawing and hitting the buttons top-left.

or Illustrator as a vector drawing. The software itself is easy to use and, helpfully, it shows thumbnails of all of your sketches.

The Inking sounds simple because it is. And the device simply works.

“The Inking is a simple idea, brilliantly done. Compact, convenient, superbly designed. And it's a bargain”


Drawings from your sketchbook translate in fantastic detail. It's easy to set up. Easy to transfer images. And therefore easy to sketch out and about and then refine and develop your sketch at your desk.

Impressively, the Inking captures hesitation marks, pen skipping from

fast strokes and even those little blobs you get when you stop a line a little too hard.

The battery life is excellent, too. After a few hours' use, Inking was still going strong (Wacom quotes eight hours).

When you do need to charge it, just pop the pen and receiver back in the neat case and plug the whole thing into a USB port.

The Inking is a simple idea, brilliantly done. Compact, convenient, superbly designed... and at £150, it's a bargain. It's an absolute must-buy. 

DETAILS

Features

- Capture digital sketches with a ball-point pen and normal paper
- Add layers whilst drawing
- 1,024 levels of pressure sensitivity
- Four spare cartridges supplied
- Charge both pen and receiver via USB
- Handy carrying case
- Sketch Manager stores hundreds of sketches on your Mac or PC
- Export directly - with layers intact - to Photoshop or Illustrator (CS3 or higher) or SketchBook Pro or Designer (2011 or later)
- Export to JPG, BMP, TIFF, PNG, SVG and PDF
- Dimensions (WxDxH): 71x32x16mm
- Weight: Approx 38g
- Receiver clip holds 10 pages

System Requirements

PC: Windows 7/Vista/XP SP3.
Mac: OS X 10.4.11 or later

Rating



ARTIST INTERVIEW

MARC TARO HOLMES

The Inking has all the ingredients to change the way you sketch

What are Inking's advantages over scanning?

This is way faster: no fixing dust marks and shadows on your paper, no fixing the white point on your scans. There's one downside: it only captures A4. I often draw bigger so I was hoping for more. I draw with small sheets of trace taped down on a larger composition. So I could do the same thing much faster. Just sketch elements separately and assemble them later.

How does converting the sketch to vectors help you?

Animation! You could totally make animated short films of your drawings. It doesn't go straight to Flash yet, but it goes to Illustrator, so it's just a matter of conversion. Plus you could blow up your lines huge with vectors if you wanted to, like book illustrators often do.

How comfortable is the pen?

It's very slightly top heavy. There's a battery in it, so it's a bit long and back heavy for a normal pen. But nothing you can't get used to in a few minutes. If you had tiny, tiny hands it might be a factor. In addition, you can't clutch the very tip of the pen like a kid doodling in a maths book.

How does the layers system help with using the sketch digitally?

I can think of a number of things. I'm definitely going to use this the way I use tracing paper. You could work in virtual layers in your sketchbook. Scribble a rough gesture, then hit the layer button and tighten your drawing. Hit the layer button before you draw the face. Maybe draw it a few times on the page. Hit layer and then draw a hat, some glasses. That's going to make sketching super flexible. Plus, in the conversion process, you can replay every pen stroke and stop wherever you want. If you forgot to make layers, you can extract them later. It's really quite a neat device.



Marc is a concept artist with over 15 years' experience. Credits include Halo Universe and Iron Man 2.

www.marctarholmes.wordpress.com

Poser 9 hasn't changed a great deal visually, but it's faster to render than ever before, with plenty of enhanced tools to please faithful users.



Poser 9 MAC & PC

FIGURE IT OUT An old favourite for creating 3D scenes and animations gets a new lease of life in this revamped update

Price \$250 **Company** Smith Micro **Web** <http://poser.smithmicro.com> **Contact** Via website

Poser is one the older 3D programs that's still being developed, and it remains synonymous with artist-friendly 3D graphics, where you can bring in ready-made figures and other models rather than create everything from scratch. You can also take advantage of an ever-growing library of content all designed to fit together.

For casual artists with little technical ability, both Poser and the rival DAZ Studio offer accessible ways to create polished images and develop your own visions of fantasy worlds. More capable artists also find Poser useful for creating roughs of scenes in minutes or for finding quick reference with exactly the view they need.

The latest release's list of new features offers few surprises after the completely revised user interface of Poser 8, but during use it's clear that a lot of work's been done. Version 9 feels faster than its predecessor, while the working viewport gives a more accurate preview of the details you'll see in your final render. Rendering is itself faster than before.

Artists who are prepared to dig into Poser's materials toolset rather than simply set the scene and render will also find more to savour. Subsurface scattering is the geeky term of the familiar effect of light through thin materials such as paper or skin, and for the first time Poser 9 enables you to adjust SSS to achieve the effect of light behind the cheek, for example. Similar adjustments to hair rendering mean your character renders look better than ever.

Despite the undoubted improvements to the software, the real interest is in the figures and other content you can buy to use with Poser. Eight human figures from the supplied large content library take advantage of the new materials, but the content does feel archaic compared to DAZ's nifty Genesis range of characters, which don't work in Poser 9. The biggest innovation to Poser figures this time around is weight mapping, but only Poser Pro 2012 (reviewed on this page) enables you to apply weight mapping: all Poser 9 can do is open the figures that Pro users have made.

DETAILS

Features

- Add and pose figures and props
- Animation system with timeline
- Material editor
- Built-in render engine
- Supports new weight-mapped figures
- Enhanced viewport preview
- Sub-surface scattering in materials
- Expanded context menus for quick support

System Requirements

PC: Windows XP/Vista/7, 1.3GHz CPU, 1GB RAM
Mac: Mac OS X 10.5 or later, 1.5GHz CPU, 1GB RAM

Rating



Poser Pro 2012 is Poser 9 on steroids, with 64-bit code and plug-ins for major 3D apps.



Poser Pro 2012

GET IN SHAPE 3D pros will love this enhanced version of Poser

Price \$500

Company Smith Micro

Web <http://poser.smithmicro.com>

RATING

The companion program to Poser 9 (also reviewed on this page), Poser Pro offers more editing and customisation options for your figures, as well as plug-ins that enable you to use your creations in major 3D packages such as 3ds Max. It's also the only one of the pair to support 64-bit processors, which is a distinction that seems a bit mean to maintain.

Naturally, Poser Pro 2012 includes all the improvements just brought in for its cheaper sibling. The main new addition to further separate the pair or packages is support for weight mapping. Common to more expensive 3D software, weight mapping enables you to define how a 3D model bends and folds as it's animated, offering more control than automatic animation systems. A common example is using weight mapping to make elbows and knees bend in a more realistic way.

Only Poser Pro 2012 enables you to apply weight mapping; Poser 9 enables you to open customised figures, but not change their settings. The weight mapping tools in Pro 2012 follow the conventions of this type of feature, but its familiarity makes it no less useful or welcome.



Poser Pro 2012's weight mapping support makes it easier to create customised figures.

Do Flame Painter's brushes really look like fire? They're certainly great for magical glows...



Flame Painter 1.5

FIRED UP Create glowing swirls and magic effects

Price £10/\$15

Company Escape Motions

Web www.bit.ly/flame-motion

RATING

Flame Painter really does only one thing, but it does it very well. Its brush set is based around flame effects, enabling you to paint glowing swirls and swishes onto your canvas. Simple slider controls make it possible to adjust the specific behaviour of the effect.

You could quibble over whether it's really a proper flame effect or just a more generic CG glow, but the program's undoubtedly capable of some pretty results. Crucially, you can save images with a transparent background, so it's easy to whip up a magic effect then take it into Photoshop to add to your painting.

This release adds the ability to load and save brush presets, which seems overdue. More interesting is the web-based library, where you can share your presets and download designs created by other artists. Although it was launched only recently, it's already offering presets that'll inspire you with new ways of using the brushes.

While we'd like to have more than two layers to paint into, Flame Painter is a useful little addition to your creative arsenal, and bodes well for the same developer's forthcoming Fluid Painter.

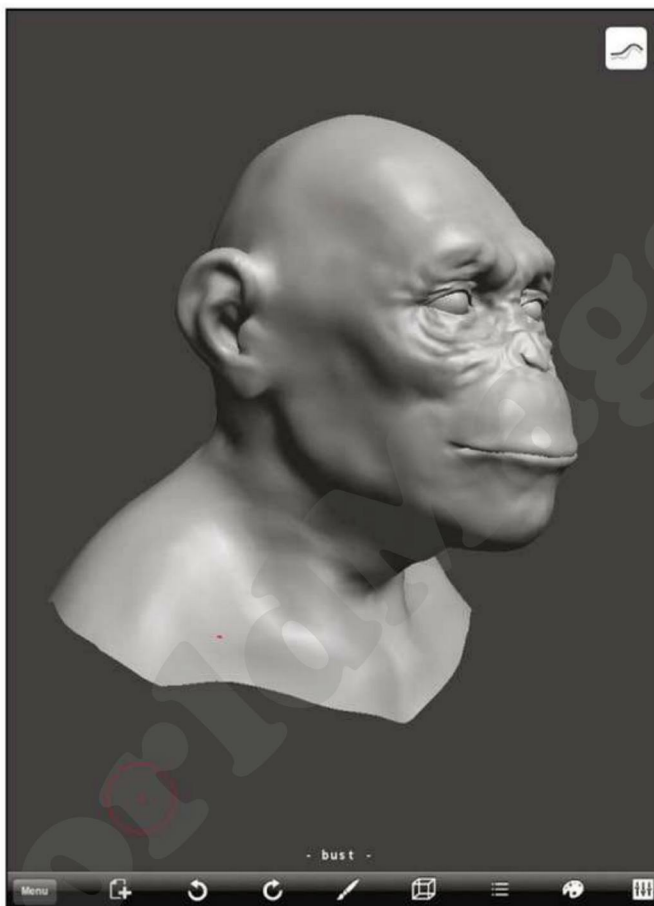


It's possible to adapt Flame Painter's brushes to achieve some very un-flame-like effects.

Forger

ZBRUSH LITE Create a digital sculpture on your iPad with this accessible little tool created by a pro 3D artist

Price £2/\$3 **Company** Javier Edo **Web** www.forgerapp.com **Contact** Via website



Forger's tools are easy to grasp. You can edit the base material to suit, although there's no support for textures as yet.

Forger's like a mini-ZBrush for your iPad, with brushes that enable you to sculpt 3D models to view from any angle.

The speed at which 3D sculpting software has moved from a highly specialist field to a mainstream activity is amazing. The likes of ZBrush and Mudbox – powerful sculpting packages with steep learning curves to get the most out of them – are now accompanied by ZBrush sibling Sculpttris and 123D Sculpt, Autodesk's free app for iPad.

Released exclusively for iPad users, Forger is a fresh attempt to disguise the technical complexity still required to generate a digital sculpture, with accessible tools encouraging you to pick up and play. Its toolbar, helpfully placed along the screen bottom for comfortable access, enables you to pick a brush and start crafting your model, with simple pan and zoom options to move the camera and view the model from any angle. But it's no

toy: it's been developed by Javier Edo, a professional effects artist who's busy working on Disney's upcoming epic sci-fi movie John Carter.

There are nine sculpting brushes to choose between, enabling you to shape your digital clay in a variety of ways. As your model becomes more detailed, you can hide areas to aid focus, and mask off areas you don't want to change while you develop a nearby surface.

The iPad's relatively limited memory means that the detail in the models you create with Forger can never match their counterparts created on a desktop computers, but Forger is still a great way to rough out designs and try ideas on the move. Best of all, you can export your model to ZBrush or Mudbox via iTunes, thanks to the app's support for the ubiquitous OBJ model format.

DETAILS

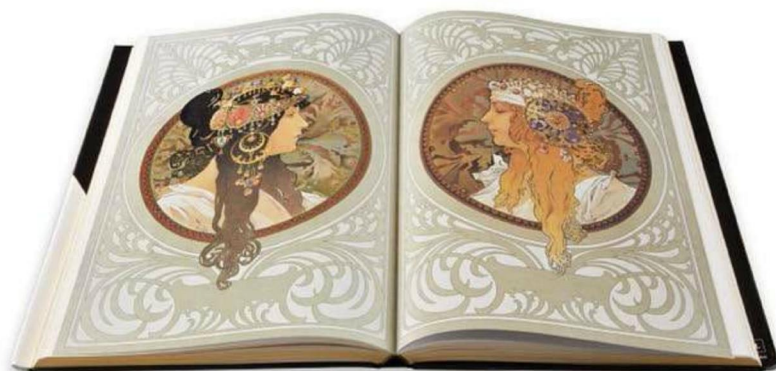
Features

- Selection of sculpting brushes
- Multi-touch 3D pan and zoom
- Hide areas you're not working on
- Mask off areas for protection
- Switch between models on different pages
- Multiple models per scene
- Import and export OBJ files
- Base material editor

System Requirements

iPad 1 or 2; not compatible with iPhone

Rating



Art Nouveau

BIG AND BEAUTIFUL Rediscover the seminal art movement in this comprehensive guide

Author Norbert Wolf **Publisher** Prestel **Price** £50
Web www.randomhouse.de **Available** Now

Art Nouveau burst on to the scene in the late 1800s, spreading throughout the Western world and changing art through its uncompromising yet populist style. The movement proved to be as influential as it was fashionable and still informs art and design today. This Prestel publication focuses on what made Art Nouveau unique in the first place, showcasing the major players of the movement with beautiful glossy prints on high-quality paper.

First of all there's the cover. All the flamboyant curves, strong lines and stylised shapes that you'd want from an Art Nouveau image are here. The design also uses geometric lines and feminine figures in a sleek composition.

Moving inside, the book's divided into eight chapters that trace the development of the style through Pre-Raphaelitism, Symbolism and Jugendstil (a German movement associated with Art Nouveau), covering its many permutations from Europe to the US. Each section is full of big, beautiful and bold pictures, with masterful page layout making the most of each image. The judicious use of white space means that despite every page being heavy on content it never feels too busy or cluttered.

There are sumptuous illustrations, art and contemporary photographs, with the Magic of Jewellery section in

particular featuring memorable ornamental imagery, such as Rene Lalique's Dragonfly woman and Peacock corsages.

A random look inside and the reader is confronted with artwork by the most famous Nouveau figures. Wild colour and intriguing compositions from Franz Von Stuck, Gustav Klimt, Ferdinand Hodler and Edvard Munch abound. The author provides plenty of detail on these key artists – all of who interpreted the style in their own way – presenting their most iconic work alongside other

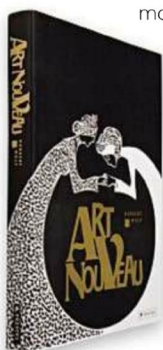
artist's lesser-known treasures. So for example, Edvard Munch's The Scream sits alongside Ferdinand Hodler's eerie nudes.

Attempting to tie together all the strands of this global phenomenon is no easy task, but happily its author's authority mirrors the book's imposing size. We get to see what part architecture and design played in the

movement, including the recognisable Paris Metro stations. It also covers painting, fashion, furniture, glassware and the leading figures such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh and glass wizard Louis Comfort Tiffany.

This is a comprehensive guide to Art Nouveau and although the language is sometimes a little academic, its gold-trimmed, high-end production and luscious prints alone justify the £50 asking price.

RATING

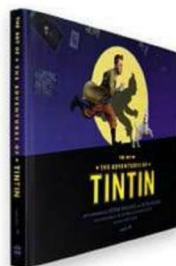


Further reading...

A classic comic gets prepped for the big screen, and a legend is laid bare

The Art of The Adventures of Tintin

Author Chris Guise
Publisher Harper Collins **Price** £25
Available Now
RATING

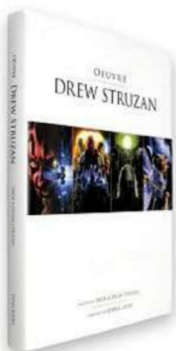


The Art of The Adventures of Tintin is a beautifully presented comic book-style guide to the making of the recently released 3D, motion-capture film. The book, created by the same artists who worked on the movie, is full of gorgeous, colourful images from each stage of production. It includes everything from detailed concept illustrations right through to final renders, as well as special artwork made exclusively for print.

This book is a great source of inspiration for artists wanting to learn more about the art and design process in films in general, with the informative text and lavish imagery providing a wonderful insight into how the original comics were given the big screen treatment.

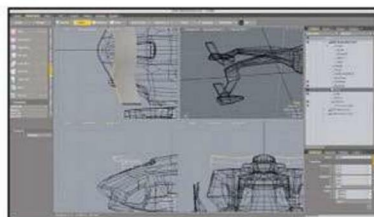
Drew Struzan: Oeuvre

Authors Drew and Dylan Struzan
Publisher Titan Books **Price** £30
Available Now
RATING



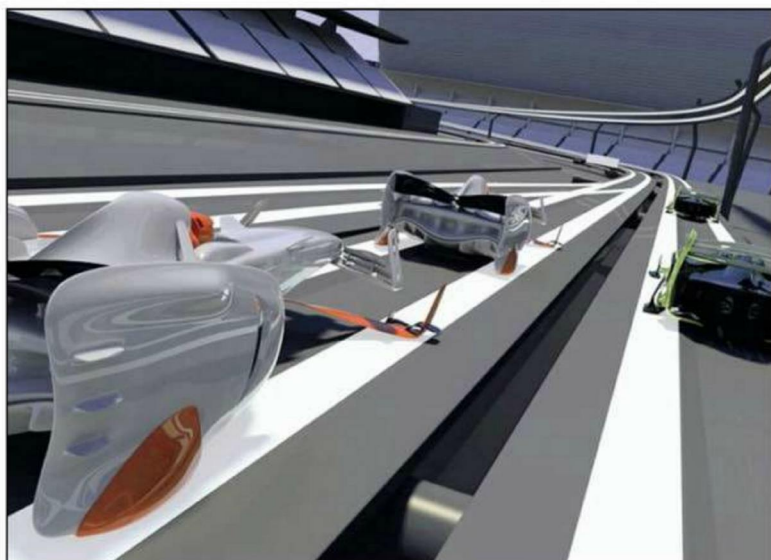
One of the first artists to feature as an ImagineFX Legend, Drew Struzan's body of work is both huge and very influential. He's behind some of the most iconic movie posters of the past 30 years, including Star Wars and Indiana Jones, but he's done a lot more besides. This 160-page book showcases Struzan's work in various media industries as well as some of his own, quite surprising personal projects (is that Diana Spencer?!).

Apart from an introduction from the artist himself, his wife and a flattering foreword from George Lucas, the text is minimal, which quite rightly leaves full pages dedicated to the incredible artwork. High-quality print and thick glossy pages capture the illustrations' fine detail and precision perfectly. This is an awe-inspiring portfolio.



Rumours that Formula 1 cars will soon look like this hadn't been denied as we went to press.

Some fantastic art, but if you're looking for in-depth training, look elsewhere.



Harald's designs have been used on real cars, such as the Lexus, and on the big-screen, too, with his often futuristic automobiles seen in the likes of TRON: Legacy, Batman and Robin, and Armageddon.

The Art of 'PULSE'

RACING THROUGH Hollywood designer Harald Belker covers lots of ground in his rendering workshop – maybe too much ground...

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$49 **Format** DVD-ROM/Download **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

Harald Belker's expertise in designing real cars for Porsche and Mercedes Benz has meant that the vehicles he's designed for Hollywood blockbusters have always felt like they could work, no matter how fantastic. That same balance is at the heart of Harald's recent book **PULSE**, which is full of meticulous visualisations of an imagined future of sleek racing vehicles and spectacular circuits.

Harald's video covers the book from the artist's perspective rather than the reader's, revealing the process he used to create the dozens of renders in **PULSE**. It's a sprawling overview, taking in car modelling in modo and circuit construction in SketchUp, as well as assembling the renders via Photoshop and specialist tool KeyShot.

You may find yourself wishing Harald had been more selective in his coverage, however. It's only occasionally that his narration goes

deep enough to satisfy artists who've progressed beyond the basics. The chapter on rendering in Photoshop in particular offers useful insights on polishing a render to perfection using reflected light and other techniques. Elsewhere, though, you'll be wishing he covered similar interesting topics in more depth – or any depth at all, for that matter. Artists heavily into vehicle design will find the few minutes where Harald talks about his guiding principles, with sketches showing the depth into which he goes while developing each concept, a tantalising glimpse of the knowledge that could have revealed if Harald had covered less ground in more detail.

If you're a fan of the book, this video makes for a fascinating behind-the-scenes supplement, albeit one that costs more than the paperback. But if you're looking for in-depth training, you're likely to find Harald's broad overview of a far bigger workflow too insubstantial.

DETAILS

Topics covered

- Concept development
- Modelling in modo
- Rendering in KeyShot
- Post-production in Photoshop
- Environments in SketchUp
- Multi-vehicle renders

Length

108 minutes

Rating



ARTIST PROFILE

HARALD BELKER

Although Harald's early design work was focused on the industrial aspects of automotive design, that changed when he was offered the chance to design the Batmobile, for the Batman & Robin movie. His credits also include the futuristic Lexus used in Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*, plus vehicle designs for *Armageddon*, *TRON: Legacy* and more. "I like to design everything," he says. "I'm working



on furniture, sports equipment, bags, toys and more. I don't ever want to do the same thing over and over."

www.haraldbelker.com



Captain America's costume is less garish than his original get-up from the 1940s.

Captain America: The First Avenger

SAFE PAIR OF HANDS Captain America is a decent if unoriginal addition to the Marvel film universe

Distributor Paramount **Certificate** 12A **Price** £13 (Blu-ray £28) **Available** Now

It seems inevitable that all mainstream comic characters will, at some point, have a shiny Hollywood film made about them (we're looking at you Green Arrow, Aquaman and The Flash). Yet lined up with his comic character pals, Captain America still seems one of the less-obvious suspects for success.

Created by Joe Simon as the ideal foil to the all-too-real über-villain Adolf Hitler, the Cap was at best a heart-on-sleeve figure of hope, at worst a pulpy jingoistic novelty that looked dated the day he was born. Thankfully, director Joe Johnston has successfully worked on some less-likely super heroes (forget 2010's *The Wolfman*, remember 1991's *The Rocketeer*) and he's got the retro style and comic tone spot on here.

Chris Evans plays Steve Rogers, a weak but willing youngster who signs up for a WWII Super Soldier programme, having been rejected from

serving in the regular US army. But he's not the only Super Soldier about. Moving from boot camp to battlefield, he soon encounters vindaloo-faced Red Skull, played by Hugo Weaving with a hilarious Werner Herzog accent.

Daniel Simon's vehicle concept art (www.bit.ly/cap-dan) provides an array of slick yet contemporary-looking mechanisms that take the action from land to sky. And with Iron Man and Thor veteran Ryan Meinerding leading a small team of character artists, the Cap ends up both noble and saturated with the grit of the frontline.

The film's hook is also the Cap's biggest weakness – his potential tackiness. Once a Super Soldier, he's thrown into garish costume and told to sell war bonds. But he's booed off stage by real soldiers and so has to win their, and our, trust. He does, making this shiny Hollywood flick well worth watching.

RATING



Also look at...

The new *Goonies* and yet another alien invasion epic, albeit a Western



Super 8

Distributor Paramount

Certificate 12A

Price £20 (£28 Blu-ray)

Available Now

RATING



When a gang of geeky, young outsiders sees a train crash that unleashes an alien creature, *Super 8* hints at being *The Goonies* for a new generation. All too soon, however, the fresh-faced

tykes get sucked into family melodrama and JJ Abrahams' love of home-movie making, when they should be investigating the Neville Page-designed monster terrorising their home town.

Where classics like *ET* gave their kids a secret and pitched them against a disbelieving adult world, *Super 8* leaves its young cast as bewildered as the adults around them. Once the cameras are put down, however, the adventure begins and our new *Goonies* come to the fore to protect their friends in a movie where the old lines between good and bad, childhood and adulthood, are rewritten as events unfold. It's just a shame JJ Abrahams takes so long to get to the film's fun.



Cowboys & Aliens

Distributor Paramount

Certificate 12

Price £20 (£28 Blu-ray)

Available Now

RATING



The decision to play it straight for a film as ridiculously titled as *Cowboys & Aliens* pays off for Iron Man director Jon Favreau.

When, in this latest alien invasion epic, the

extraterrestrial ne'er-do-wells pounce it somehow fits with Favreau's classically devised Western. The effects are physical – actors were lassoed and torn 80 feet into the air at 70mph, to replicate the alien abductions – and Harrison Ford and Daniel Craig both convince.

Part *Alien*, part *Predator*, the designers, including James Clyne, have hardly stretched the canvas with this new alien breed, but then little about the movie goes further than what's in plain sight.

The aliens threaten genocide, but Favreau holds back from making any connections to history, or embracing the allegory rife in the Western genre, ensuring the movie is as one dimensional, but fun, as the name suggests.

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"You don't always need some grand conceptual idea that's one day going to get into the D&AD Annual!"
Jamie Wieck, see page 55

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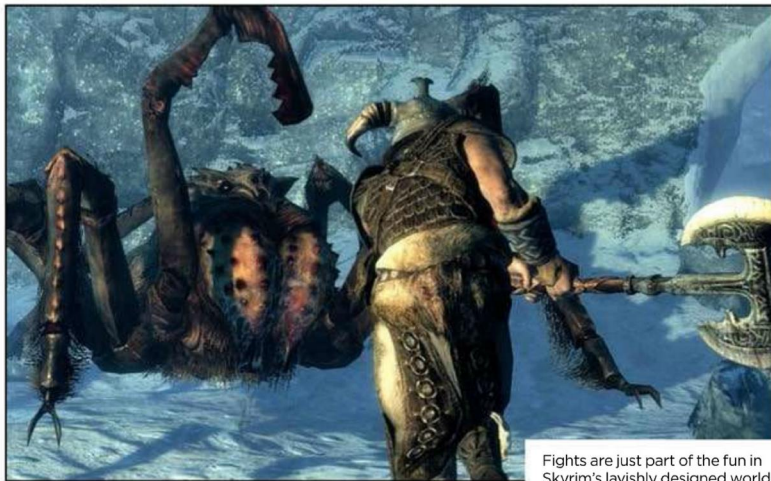
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Fights are just part of the fun in Skyrim's lavishly designed world.

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

GIMME FIVE Play Bethesda's masterpiece and prepare to be lost in an RPG that exceeds all expectations

Format PC, PS3, 360 **Publisher** Bethesda
Price £50 **Available Now** **Web** www.elderscrolls.com

This is it. *Skyrim* is as good as games get. In *Skyrim*'s massive open world there are endless hours of quests, hundreds of people to talk to, thousands of items to use and a million stories to be told. No two players will get the same game from *Skyrim*, such is the immense scope of the gaming experience that Bethesda has created.

It's not just the size but the detail that makes *Skyrim* so good. Go deep into the game's caves and dungeons and you'll find that every space has its own sense of time and place. Art director Matt Carofano and his team have succeeded in making polygons and textures feel ancient and weathered. Go deeper and you'll find incredible variety in the

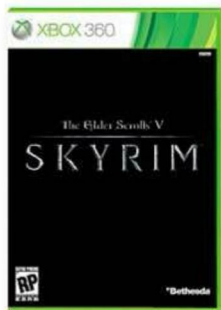
hundreds of hand-crafted dungeons: towers toppled onto their side, frozen and haunted forts, gangs of bandits huddling in caves for warmth.

Go deeper still and you find detail present at the tiniest level, such as illustrated book covers on bookshelves, frayed patterned rugs on basement floors, collapsed statues littering ancient forests. *Skyrim*'s world is a real world with a life and history crafted by the game's artists, begging to be touched, read and seen.

Better still, it's a world that you're encouraged to make your own. You can play the game for a 100 hours without ever touching the main

storyline and fight every fight your own way, as a hatchet-wielding barbarian, a bony old mage or a sneaky thief with magic or blades, with one weapon or two. *Skyrim* is the greatest adventure toolbox ever rendered in a video game, and the most lavish and detailed world outside the one you're sitting in right now. An essential purchase if ever there was one.

RATING



Also look at...

A restrictive adventure romp fares better than a hit man's third outing



Uncharted 3

Format PS3
Publisher Sony
Price £50
Available Now
RATING

Filling a 3D space with life and presence is a tricky task when the player can place the camera wherever they please, as *Uncharted 3*'s Art Director Robh Ruppel explained in his concept art workshop back in issue 75. But *Uncharted* has it easier than *Skyrim* or *Assassin's Creed*, because this is Naughty Dog's game, not yours.

Uncharted 3 is a rip-roaring, block-busting, Hollywood extravaganza where you're more an actor in a scene rather than a player in a game. Deviate even slightly from what *Uncharted* would have Nathan Drake do next and you'll be corrected or killed. *Uncharted 2* was no different of course, and between them they're the very pinnacle of those highly scripted action adventure games. When designers know where players will be, they can create the



most spectacular artistic set-pieces ever placed in a video game. It's a thrilling and visually stunning ride, but between those peaks it's sometimes hard to ignore the rails that you're riding.



Assassin's Creed Revelations

Format PS3, 360
Publisher Ubisoft
Price £50
Available Now
RATING

Revelations' Art Director Alex Amancio took the game's art team to the Middle Eastern locations Ezio visits in his third and final *Assassin's Creed* game to "help them build an authentic world, not Disneyland". His team succeeded; the rest of *Assassin's Creed*'s six studios didn't fare so well.

While the artists were building credible cities, the other teams were forced to build an *Assassin's Creed* theme



park. *Revelations*' take on Constantinople and other surprise locations feels more realistic than ever, with new lighting, water and smoke effects breathing life into the world, but it's a world filled

with the same old missions in the same old structure – material from *Assassin's Creed 2*'s cutting room floor.

Yet they're good missions and it's a good structure, which makes *Revelations* a hard game to dislike. Yet it's an artistic achievement rather than a creative one – the real evolution will have to wait for *Assassin's Creed 3*.

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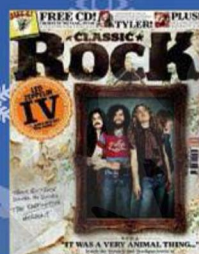
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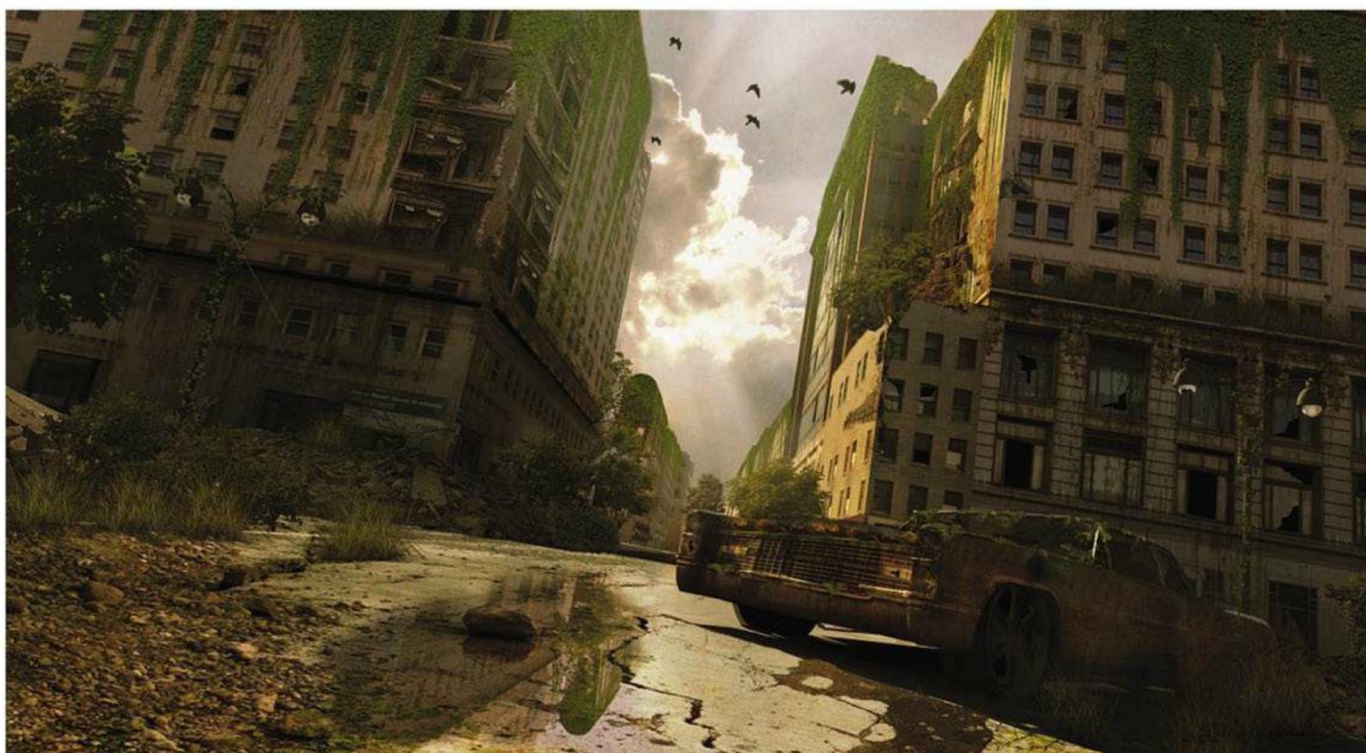


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LOCATION Warrington, UK **RECENT PROJECT** Unannounced video game **WEB** www.alienapplestudios.com



The team has many years' experience in the video games industry, which means as well as submitting final art they can note any potential problems that may arise from bringing a scene to fruition.

Alien Apple Studios

BRAVE NEW WORLD Three artists found inspiration in a moment of crisis and created their own studio

Redundancy is all-too familiar at the moment, but Alien Apple Studios shows there can be a positive outcome of a turbulent time. Formed by three friends when their company THQ Digital UK closed its doors, the studio is proving good things can come from bad situations.

"We decided to seize this opportunity to finally strike out on our own and show what we can really do," says co-founder and concept artist Stuart Jennet. Along with Donna Jennett and Paul Nolan the trio chose to go it alone, using their years of experience and creative-working dynamic to their advantage with a new and varied client base.



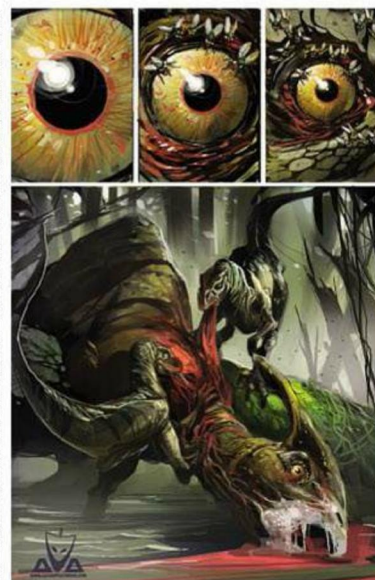
"We're proud of what we've achieved in such a short time, but we've got a lot



more to give in the future," adds Donna, who leads the studio's 3D, graphic design and UI projects.

Working in pre-production on video games, the team help define the visual language of a project from the outset. Often the brief is tight, but occasionally the team can develop new ideas. "This is where we try and take the designs to the next level, hopefully producing something new and fresh," says Donna.

Being a small team and co-founders of their own studio, the trio need to balance their business hats with the artistic urges that pulled them to this career. Donna points out that to succeed in the concept art industry you need to have passion and a solid foundation in the art and design principles of perspective, colour theory



Storyboarding is a key skill the team can bring to a project, such as this sequence that reveals a shocking twist.

ARTIST INTERVIEW

PAUL DOLAN

Co-founder Paul helps create concepts, storyboards and key art

What's the biggest challenge of working at Alien Apple Studios?

For us, the biggest step was moving from a large studio environment where we only concentrated on the work, to being in control of all aspects of the business ourselves. It's been a steep learning curve, but it's also incredibly exciting being in the position to steer the company in the direction we want.

What skills would someone need to work – and succeed – at your company?

You have to be passionate about the work and self-motivated. This isn't a nine-to-five profession... we eat, sleep and breathe the job here! A keen interest in all areas of the visual arts is needed just because of the sheer variety of projects that the company works on. One day it can be character and costume design, the next it'll be an architecture project.

What work or project are you most proud of, and why?

It's still very early days, but we've been working on our own IP and the ideas that we've had collectively are really strong. This will ultimately be a long-term project that will be a real representation of what this studio has to offer. We want to demonstrate that we're creators of unique and exciting properties for the entertainment world, and at this point I think we're ideally positioned and experienced enough to do that.

Why would you recommend Alien Apple Studios as a place to work?

Although Alien Apple Studios is a relatively new company, there's already a buzz here about the work that we're doing for clients and the assignments which we have lined up. Right now Alien Apple may be a small studio, but the team agrees that it has a big future ahead of it.

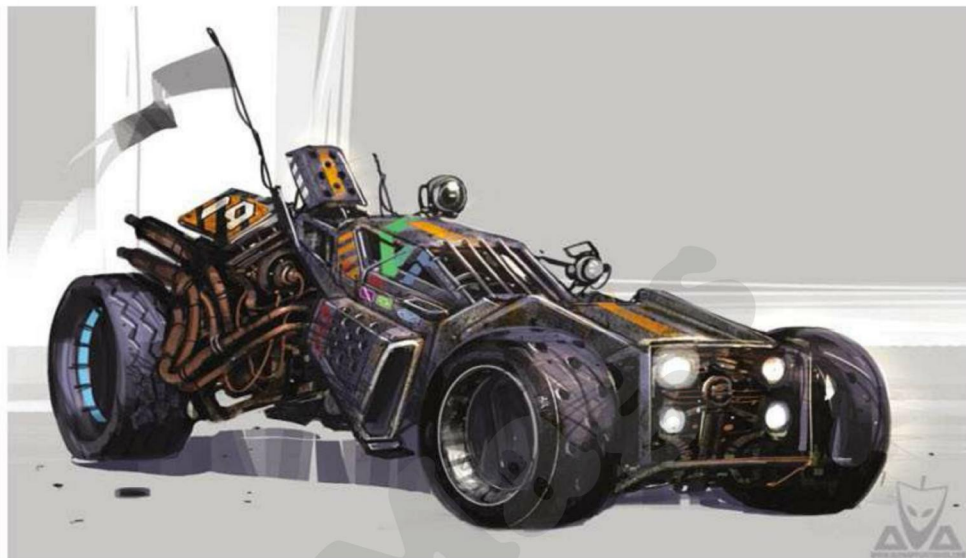


Paul is a key leader in the studios concept art department and has 13 years' experience in the video games industry.

www.alienapplestudios.com



PROJECTS (Before Alien Apple) Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter, Warhammer 40,000 Kill Team, SplitSecond



Work on games such as Juiced and SplitSecond proves that Stuart and Paul have a talent for creating dynamic-looking vehicles.

and composition. Just as importantly, Donna adds a successful artist would need to have a "fresh eye on how to approach a brief," explaining, "to create

the industry looks to new ways to work and supply content to gamers, adaptable contractors become an effective solution. "It's about saving

“We constantly have to be pushing ourselves and delivering a higher grade of artwork to stay in the race”

something new that no one else has seen before is always a challenge”.

By creating Alien Apple Studios the team believe they offer a perfect solution to a growing demand as the video games industry shifts to an outsourcing model. Furthermore, as

money,” says Stuart, “but also still wanting to deliver high-end, cutting edge products.”

However, as the industry changes shape Stuart is aware that competition for contracts is growing. “We don't kid ourselves: it's a very competitive market,” says the artist. “The areas that we specialise in have always been competitive and this is generally a huge positive for us, because it means we constantly have to be pushing ourselves and delivering a higher grade of artwork to stay in the race.”

It's a race that Alien Apple Studios is enjoying being a part of. Donna reveals that alongside contract work on a video game set to be announced next year, the team are working on new internal IP (intellectual property), which could be ready for pitching within the year. The team is also finding new creative vigour in the successes of the past few months, in particular the personal achievement of getting Alien Apple Studios off the ground. “This makes us really proud,” says Stuart. ●



Creating quick character and creature sketches enables the team to come up with new ideas.

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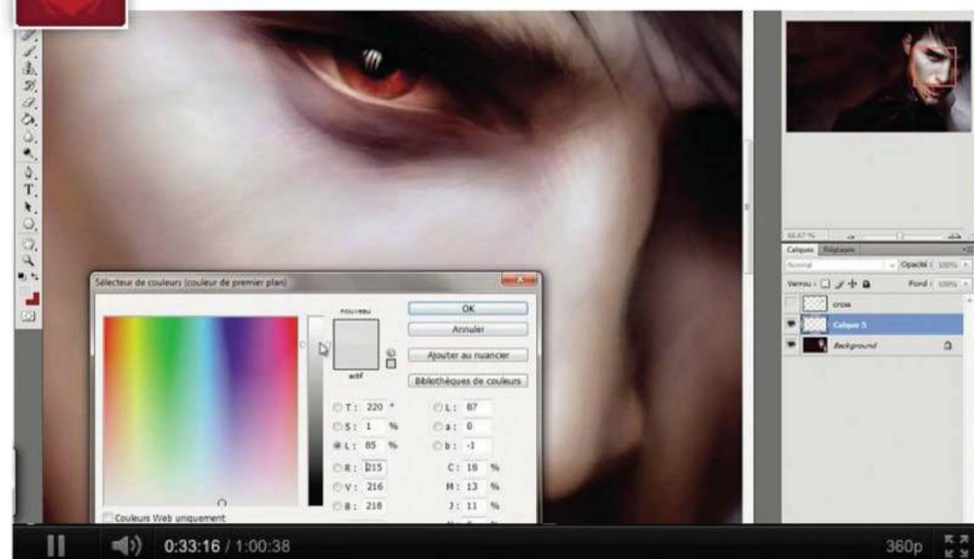
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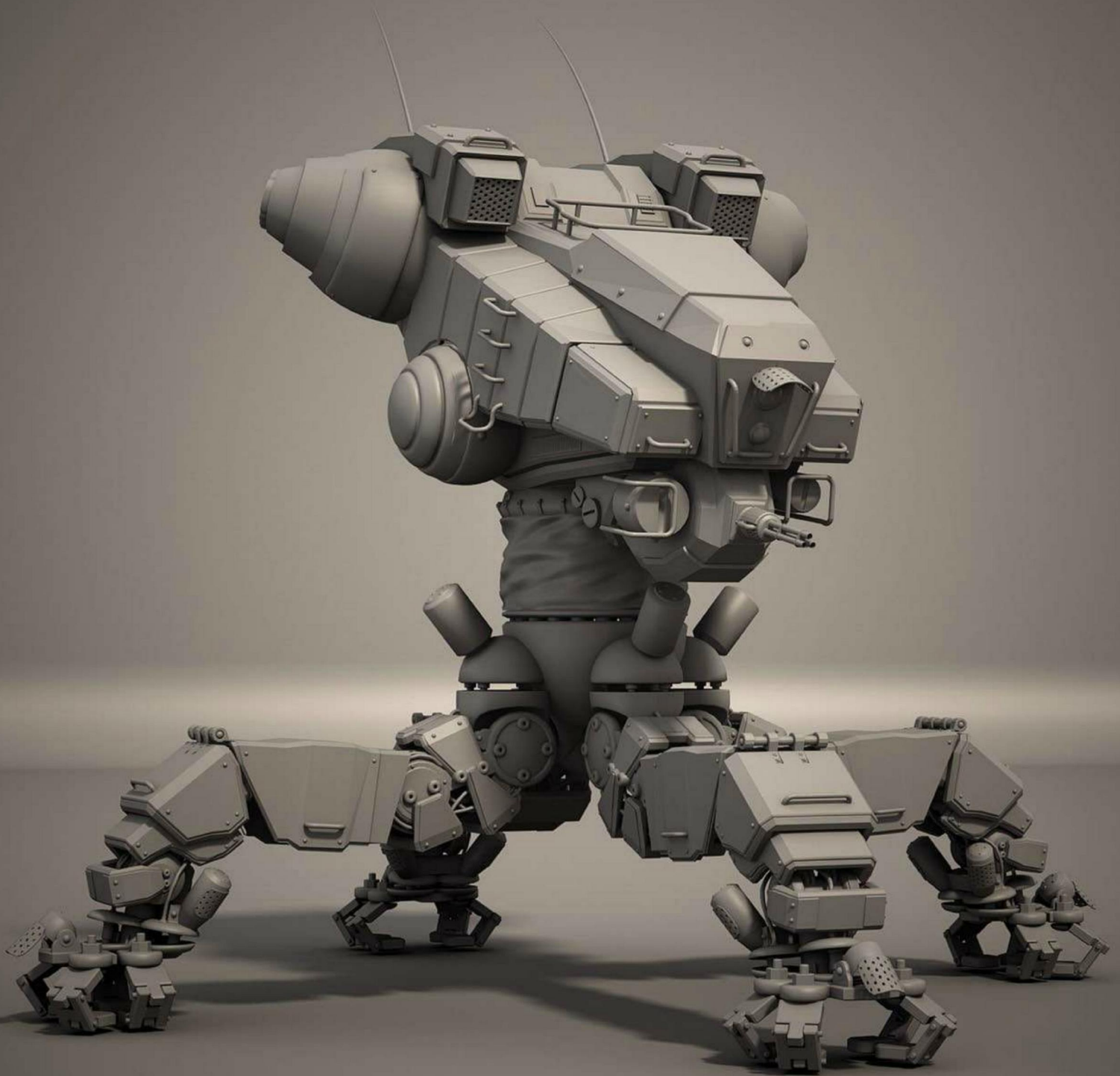


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